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THE MAYOR OF TROY

THE MAYOR OF TROY

WRITTEN BY

"Q."

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TO MY FRIEND

KENNETH GRAHAME

AND

THE REST OF THE CREW

OF THE

"RICHARD AND EMILY"

AND WITH APOLOGIES TO

THE MAYOR OF

LOSTWITHIEL

A BOROUGH

FOR WHICH I HAVE (WITH CAUSE)

MUCH AFFECTION AND

A VERY HIGH ESTEEM

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THE MAYOR OF TROY

PROLOGUE

GOOD wine needs no bush ; but this story has to begin with an apology.

Years ago I promised myself to write a treatise on the lost Mayors of Cornwall — dignitaries whose pleasant fame is now night, recalled only by some neat byword or proverb current in the Delectable (or as a public speaker pronounced it the other day, the Dialectable) Duchy. Thus you may hear of " the Mayor of Falmouth, who thanked God when the town gaol was enlarged ; " " the Mayor of Market Jew, sitting in his own light ; " " the Mayor of Tregoney, who could read print upside-down, but wasn't above being spoken to ; " " the Mayor of Calenick, who walked two miles to ride one ; " " the Mayor of East Looe, who called the King of England ' Brother.' " Everyone remembers the stately prose in which Gibbon records when and how he determined on his great masterpiece, when and how he completed it. " It was at Rome : on the 15th of October, 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the bare-footed friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the Decline and Fall of the City first started in my mind."

So I could tell with circumstance when, where and how I first proposed my treatise ; and will, perhaps, when I have concluded it. But life is short ; and for the while my readers may be amused with an instalment.

. . . . . .

Now of all the Mayors of Cornwall the one who most engaged my speculation, yet for a long while baffled all research, was " the Mayor of Troy, so popular that the town made him Ex-Mayor the year following."

Of course, if you don't know Troy, you will miss half the reason of my eagerness. Simple, egregious, adorable town ! Shall I go on here to sing its praises ? No ; not yet.

The reason why I could learn nothing concerning him is that, soon after 1832, when the Reform Bill did away with Troy's Mayor and Corporation, as well as with its two Members of Parliament, someone made a bonfire of all the Borough records. O Alexandria ! And the man said at the time that he did it for fun !

This brings me to yet another Mayor—the Mayor of Lestiddle, who is a jolly good fellow.

Nothing could be handsomer than my calling the Mayor of Lestiddle a jolly good fellow ; for in fact we live at daggers drawn. You must know that Troy, a town of small population (two thousand or so) but of great character and importance, stands at the mouth of a river where it widens into a harbour singularly beautiful and frequented by ships of all nations ; and that seven miles up this river, by a

bridge where the salt tides cease, stands Lestiddle, a town of fewer inhabitants and of no character or importance at all. Now why the Reform Bill, which sheared Troy of its ancient dignities, should have left Lestiddle's untouched, is a question no man can answer me; but this I know, that its Mayor goes flourishing about with a silver mace shaped like an oar, as a symbol of jurisdiction over our river from its mouth (forsooth) so far inland as a pair of oxen yoked together can be driven in its bed.

He has, in fact, no such jurisdiction. Above bridge he may, an it please him, drive his oxen up the river bed, and welcome. I leave him to the anglers he will discommodate by it. But his jurisdiction below bridge was very properly taken from him by order of our late Queen (whose memory be blessed!) in Council, and vested in the Troy Harbour Commission. Now *I* am Chairman of that Commission, and yet the fellow declines to yield up his silver oar! We in Troy feel strongly about it. It is not for nothing (we hold) that when he or his burgesses come down the river for a day's fishing the weather invariably turns dirty. We mislike them even worse than a German band—which brings us no worse, as a rule, than a spell of east wind.

Nevertheless, the Mayor of Lestiddle is a jolly good fellow, and I am glad that his townsmen (such as they are) have re-elected him. One day this last summer he came down to fish for mackerel at the harbour's mouth, which can be done at anchor since our sardine factory has taken to infringing the by-laws and discharging its offal on the wrong side of the

prescribed limit. (We Harbour Commissioners have set our faces against this practice, but meanwhile it attracts the fish.) It was raining, of course. Rowing close up to me, the Mayor of Lestiddle asked—for we observe the ordinary courtesies—what bait I was using. I answered, fresh pilchard bait; and offered him some, delicately forbearing to return the question, since it is an article of faith with us that the burgesses of Lestiddle bait with earthworms which they dig out of their back gardens. Well, he accepted my pilchard bait, and pulled up two score of mackerel within as many minutes, which doubtless gave him something to boast about on his return.

He was not ungrateful. Next week I received from him a parcel of MS. with a letter saying that he had come across it, "a fly in amber," in turning over a pile of old Stannary records. How it had found its way among them he could not guess.

A fly in amber, quotha! A jewel in a midden, rather! How it came among his trumpery archives I know as little as he, but can guess. Some Lestiddle man must have stolen it, and chosen them as a safe hiding-place.

It gave me the clue, and more than the clue. I know now the history of that Mayor of Troy, who was so popular that the town made him Ex-Mayor the year following.

Listen! Stretch out both hands; open your mouth and shut your eyes! It is a draught of Troy's own vintage that I offer you; racy, fragrant of the soil, from a cask these hundred years sunk, so that it carries a smack, too, of the submerging brine.

You know the old recipe for Wine of Cos, that full-bodied, seignorial, superlative, translunary wine.

Yet I know not how to begin.

"Fortunam Priami cantabo et nobile bellum."

"I will sing you Troy and its Mayor and a war of high renown," that is how I want to begin; but Horace in his *Ars Poetica*—confound him!—has chosen this very example as a model to avoid, and the critics would be down on me in a pack.

Very well, then, let us try a more reputable way.

CHAPTER I

OUR MAJOR

ARMS and the Man I sing!

When, on the 16th of May, 1803, King George III. told his faithful subjects that the Treaty of Amiens was no better than waste paper, Troy neither felt nor affected to feel surprise. King, Consul, Emperor—it knew these French rulers of old, under whatever title they might disguise themselves. More than four centuries ago an English King had sent his pursuivants down to us with a message that "the Gallants of Troy must abstain from attacking, plundering, and sinking the ships of our brother of France, because we, Edward of England, are at peace with our brother of France:" and the Gallants of Troy had returned an answer at once humble and firm: "Your Majesty best knows your Majesty's business, but *we* are at war with your brother of France." Yes, we knew these Frenchmen. Once before, in 1456, they had thought to surprise us, choosing a night when our Squire was away at market, and landing a force to burn and sack us: and our Squire's wife had met them with boiling lead. His Majesty's Ministers might be taken at unawares, not we. We slept Bristol fashion, with one eye open.

But when, as summer drew on, news came that the infamous usurper was collecting troops at Boulogne, and flat-bottomed boats, to invade us; when the spirit of the British people armed for the support of their ancient glory and independence against the unprincipled ambition of the French Government; when, in the Duchy alone, no less than 8511 men and boys enrolled themselves in twenty-nine companies of foot, horse and artillery, as well out of enthusiasm as to escape the general levy threatened by Government (so mixed are all human motives); then, you may be sure, Troy did not lag behind.

Ah! but we had some brave corps among the Duchy Volunteers!

There was the St Germans Subscription Troop, for instance, which consisted of forty men and eleven uniforms, and hunted the fox thrice a week during the winter months under Lord Eliot, Captain and M.F.H. There was the Royal Redruth Infantry, the famous "Royal Reds," of 103 men and five uniforms. These had heard, at second hand, of Bonaparte's vow to give them no quarter, and wore a conspicuous patch of red in the seat of their pantaloons that he might have no excuse for mistaking them. There was the even more famous Mevagissey Battery, of no men and 121 uniforms. In Mevagissey, as you may be aware, the bees fly tail-foremost; and therefore, to prevent bickerings, it was wisely resolved at the first drill to make every unit of this corps an officer.

But the most famous of all (and sworn rivals) were

two companies of coast artillery—the Looe Diehards and the Troy Gallants.

The Looe Diehards (seventy men and two uniforms) wore dark blue coats and pantaloons, with red facings, yellow wings and tassels, and white waistcoats. Would you know by what feat they earned their name? Listen. I quote the very words of their commander, Captain Bond, who survived to write a *History of Looe*—and a sound book it is. "The East and West Looe Volunteer Artillery was established in 1803, and kept in pay from Government for six years. Not a single man of the company died during the six years, which is certainly very remarkable."

But, when you come to think of it, what an even more remarkable boast for a body of warriors!

We of Troy (180 men and two uniforms) laughed at this claim. Say what you will, there is no dash about longevity, or very little. For uniform we wore dark blue coats and pantaloons, with white wings and facings, edged and tasselled with gilt, and scarlet waistcoats, also braided with gilt. We wanted no new name, we! Ours was an inherited one, derived from days when, under Warwick the King-maker, Lord High Admiral of England, we had swept the Channel, summoned the men of Rye and Winchelsea to vail their bonnets—to take in sail, mark you: no trumpery dipping of a flag would satisfy us—and when they stiff-neckedly refused, had silenced the one town and carried off the other's chain to hang across our harbour from blockhouse to blockhouse. Also, was it not a gallant of Troy that

assailed and carried the great French pirate, Jean Dorée, and clapped him under his own hatches ?

" The roaring cannons then were plied,
And dub-a-dub went the drum-a ;
The braying trumpets loud they cried
To courage both all and some-a.

The grappling-hooks were brought at length,
The brown bill and the sword-a ;
John Dory at length, for all his strength,
Was clapt fast under board-a."

That was why we wore our uniforms embroidered with gold (*dorés*). The Frenchmen, if they came, would understand the taunt.

But most of all we were proud of Solomon Hymen, our Major and our Mayor of Troy.

I can see him now as he addressed us on the evening of our first drill, standing beside the two long nineteen-pounders on the Old Fort ; erect, with a hand upon his ivory sword-hilt, his knops and epaulettes flashing against the level sun. I can see his very gesture as he enjoined silence on the band ; for we had a band, and it was playing " Come, Cheer Up, My Lads ! " As though we weren't cheerful enough already !

. . . . . .

[But " Come, come ! " the reader will object. " All this happened a hundred years ago. Yet here are you talking as if you had been present." Very true : it is a way we have in Troy. Call it a foible—but forgive it ! The other day, for instance, happening on the Town Quay, I found our gasman, Mr Rabling, an earnest Methodist, discussing to a small

crowd on the subject of the Golden Calf, and in this fashion : " Well, friends, in the midst of all this pillaloo, hands-across and down-the-middle, with old Aaron as bad as any and flinging his legs about more boldacious with every caper, I happens to glance up the hill, and with that I gives a whistle ; for what do I see but a man aloft there picking his way down on his heels with a parcel under his arm ! Every now and then he pulls up, shading his eyes, so, like as if he'd a lost his bearin's. I glances across to Aaron, and thinks I, 'Look out for squalls! Here's big brother coming, and a nice credit *this'll* be to the family ! ' . . ." The historic present, as my Latin grammar used to call it, is our favourite tense : and if you insist that, not being a hundred years old, I cannot speak as an eye-witness of this historic scene, my answer must be Browning's,—

" All I can say is—I saw it ! "]

. . . . . .

" Gentlemen ! " began the Major.

We might not all be officers, like the Mevagissey Artillery, but in the Troy Gallants we were all gentlemen.

" Gentlemen ! "—the Major waved an arm seaward—" yonder lies your enemy. Behind you "—he pointed up the harbour to the town—" England relies on your protection. Shall the Corsican tyrant lay his lascivious hands upon her ancient liberties, her reformed and Protestant religion, her respectable Sovereign and his Consort, her mansions, her humble cottages, and those members of the opposite sex whose charms reward, and, in rewarding, refine us ?

Or shall we meet his flat-bottomed boats with a united front, a stern 'Thus far and no farther,' and send them home with their tails between their legs? That, gentlemen, is the alternative. Which will you choose?"

Here the Major paused, and finding that he expected an answer, we turned our eyes with one consent upon Gunner Sobey, the readiest man in the company.

"The latter!" said Gunner Sobey, with precision; whereat we gave three cheers. We dined, that afternoon, in the Long Room of the Ship Inn, and afterwards danced the night through in the Town Hall.

The Major danced famously. Above all things, he prided himself on being a ladies' man, and the fair sex (as he always called them) admired him without disguise. His manner towards them was gallant yet deferential, tender yet manly. He conceded everything to their weakness; yet no man in Troy could treat a woman with greater plainness of speech. The confirmed spinsters (high and low, rich and poor, we counted seventy-three of them in Troy) seemed to like him none the less because he lost no occasion, public or private, of commending wedlock. For the doctrine of Mr Malthus (recently promoted to a Professorship at the East India College) he had a robust contempt. He openly regretted that, owing to the negligence of our forefathers, the outbreak of war found Great Britain with but fifteen million inhabitants to match against twenty-five million Frenchmen. *They* threatened to invade *us*, whereas *we* should rather have been in a position to march on

Paris. He asked nothing better. He quoted with sardonic emphasis the remark of a politician that "'twas hardly worth while to go to war merely to prove that we could put ourselves in a good posture for defence."

"If I had my way," announced Major Hymen, "every woman in England should have a dozen children at least."

"What a man!" said Miss Pescod afterwards to Miss Sally Tregentil, who had dropped in for a cup of tea.

And yet the Major was a bachelor. They could not help wondering a little.

"With two such names, too!" mused Miss Sally. "'Solomon' and 'Hymen'; they certainly suggest —they would almost seem to give promise of, at least, a *dual* destiny."

"You mark my words," said Miss Pescod. "That man has been crossed in love."

"But *who?*" asked Miss Sally, her eyes widening in speculation. "*Who* could have done such a thing?"

"My dear, I understand there are women in London capable of anything."

The Major, you must know, had spent the greater part of his life in the capital as a silk-mercer and linendraper—I believe, in the Old Jewry; at any rate, not far from Cheapside. He had left us at the age of sixteen to repair the fortunes of his family, once opulent and respected, but brought low by his great-grandfather's rash operations in South Sea stock. In London, thanks to an ingratiating manner

with the sex on which a linendraper relies for patronage, he had prospered, had amassed a competence, and had sold his business to retire to his native town, as Shakespeare retired to Stratford-on-Avon, and at about the same period of life.

Had the Major in London been crossed in love ? No ; I incline to believe that Miss Pescod was mistaken. That hearts, up there, fluttered for a man of his presence is probable, nay certain. In port and even in features he bore a singular likeness to the Prince Regent. He himself could not but be aware of this, having heard it so often remarked upon by persons acquainted with his Royal Highness as well as by others who had never set eyes on him. In short, our excellent Major may have dallied in his time with the darts of love ; there is no evidence that he ever took a wound.

Within a year after his return he bought back the ancestral home of the Hymens, a fine house dating from the reign of Queen Anne. (His great-grandfather had built it on the site of a humbler abode, on the eve of the South Sea collapse.) It stood at the foot of Custom House Hill and looked down the length of Fore Street—a perspective view of which the Major never wearied—no, not even on hot afternoons when the population took its siesta within doors and, in the words of Cai Tamblyn, "you might shot a cannon down the streets of Troy, and no person would be shoot." This Cai (or Caius) Tamblyn, an eccentric little man of uncertain age, with a black servant Scipio, who wore a livery of green and scarlet and slept under the stairs, made

up the Major's male retinue. Between them they carried his sedan chair; and because Cai (who walked in front) measured but an inch above five feet, whereas Scipio stood six feet three in his socks, the Major had a seat contrived with a sharp backward slope, and two wooden buffers against which he thrust his feet when going down hill. Besides these, whom he was wont to call, somewhat illogically, his two factotums, his household comprised Miss Marty and a girl Lavinia who, as Miss Marty put it, did odds and ends. Miss Marty was a poor relation, a third or fourth cousin on the maternal side, whom the Major had discovered somewhere on the other side of the Duchy, and promoted. Socially she did not count. She asked no more than to be allowed to feed and array the Major, and gaze after him as he walked down the street.

And what a progress it was!

Again I can see him as he made ready for it, standing in his doorway at the head of a flight of steps, which led down from it to the small wrought-iron gate opening on the street. The house has since been converted into bank premises and its threshold lowered for the convenience of customers. Gone are the plants—the myrtle on the right of the porch, the jasmine on the left—with the balusters over which they rambled, and the steps which the balusters protected—ah, how eloquently the Major's sword clanked upon these as he descended! But the high-pitched roof remains, with its three dormer windows still leaning awry, and the plaster porch where a grotesque, half-human face grins at you from the middle of a fluted

sea-shell. Standing before it with half-closed eyes, I behold the steps again, and our great man at the head of them receiving his hat from the obsequious Scipio, drawing on his gloves, looping his malacca cane to his wrist by its tasselled cord of silk. The descent might be military or might be civil : he was always Olympian.

" The handsome he is ! " Miss Marty would sigh, gazing after him.

" A fine figure of a man, our Major ! " commented Butcher Oke, following him from the shop-door with a long stare, after the day's joint had been discussed and chosen.

The children, to whom he was ever affable, stopped their play to take and return his smile. Some even grinned and saluted. They reserved their awe for Scipio. Indeed, there is a legend that when Scipio made his first appearance in Fore Street—he being so tall and the roadway so narrow—he left in his wake two rows of supine children who, parting before him, had gradually tilted back as their gaze climbed up his magnificent and liveried person until the sight of his ebon face toppled them over, flat.

Miss Jex, the postmistress, would hand him his letters or his copy of the *Sherborne Mercury* with a troubled blush. No exception surely could be taken if she, a Government official, chose to hang a coloured engraving of the Prince Regent on the wall behind her counter. And yet—the resemblance ! She had heard of irregular alliances, Court scandals ; she had even looked out " Morganatic " in the dictionary, blushing for the deed while pretending (fie, Miss

Jex!) that "Moravian" was the word she sought.

In Admirals' Row—its real name was Admiral's Row, and had been given to it in 1758, after the capture of Louisbourg and in honour of Admiral Boscawen; but we in Troy preferred to write the apostrophe after the *s*—Miss Sally Tregentil would overpeer her blind and draw back in a flutter lest the Major had observed her.

"Georgiana Pescod is positive that he was wild in his youth. But how," Miss Sally asked herself, "can Georgiana possibly know? And if he were—"

I leave you, my reader, as you know the female heart, to continue Miss Sally's broken musings.

CHAPTER II

OUR MAYOR

CEDANT arma togae. It is time we turned from the Major to the Mayor, from the man of gallantry to the magistrate.

You know, I dare say, the story of the King of England and the King of Portugal. The King of Portugal paid the King of England a visit. "My brother," said the King of England, after some days, "I wish to ask you a question." "Say on," said the King of Portugal. "I am curious to know what in these realms of mine has most impressed you?" The King of Portugal considered a while. "Your roast beef is excellent," said he. "And after our roast beef, what next?" The King of Portugal considered a while longer. "Your boiled beef very nearly approaches it." So, if you had asked us on what first of all we prided ourselves in Troy, we had pointed to our Major. If you had asked "What next?" we had pointed to our Mayor.

And these, our Dioscuri, were one and the same man! In truth, I suppose we ought to have been proudest of him as Mayor; since as Mayor he represented the King himself among us—nay, to all intent and purposes *was* the King. More than once in his public speeches he reminded us of this: and we were glad to remember it when—as sometimes happened

—we ran a cargo from Roscoff or Guernsey and left a cask or two privily behind the Mayor's quay door. We felt then that his Majesty had been paid duty, and could have no legitimate grievance against us.

Was there any mental confusion in this? You would pardon it had you ever been privileged to witness his Sunday procession to church, in scarlet robe trimmed with sable, in cocked hat and chain of office; the mace-bearers marching before in scarlet with puce-coloured capes, the aldermen following after in tasselled gowns of black; the band ahead playing "The Girl I left behind Me" (for, although organised for home defence, our corps had chosen this to be its regimental tune). "Some talk of Alexander and some of Hercules"—and some of Solomon, who never saw *our* Solomon on the bench of justice!

Let me tell you of his famous decision on Sabbath-breaking. One Sunday afternoon our Mayor's slumbers were interrupted by Jago the constable, who haled before him a man, a horse, and two pannier-loads of vegetables, and charged the first named with this heinous offence. The fellow—a small tenant-farmer from the outskirts of the parish—could not deny that he had driven his cart down to the Town Quay, unharnessed, and started in a loud voice to cry his wares. There, almost on the instant, Jago had taken him *in flagrante delicto*, and, having an impediment in his speech, had used no words but collared him.

"What have you to say for yourself?" the Mayor demanded.

" Darn me if I know what's amiss with the town to-day ! " the culprit made answer. " Be it a funeral ? "

" You are charged with trading, or attempting to trade, on the Sabbath ; and sad hearing this will be for your old parents, John Polkinghorne."

John Polkinghorne scratched his head. " You ben't going to tell me that this be Sunday ! " (You see, the poor fellow, living so far in the country, had somehow miscounted the week, and ridden in to market a day late.)

" Sunday ? " cried the Mayor. " Look at my Bible, there, 'pon the table ! Look at my clean bandanna ! "—this was his handkerchief, that he had been wearing over his face while he dozed, to keep off the flies.

" Good Lord ! And me all this morning in the home-field scoading* dung ! "

" You go home this instant, and take every bit of that dung off again before sunset," commanded the Mayor, " and if the Lord says no more about it, we'll overlook the case."

Maybe you have never heard either of his famous examination of Sarah Mennear, of the Three Pilchards Inn (commonly known as the " Kettle of Fish"), who applied for a separation, alleging that her husband had kissed her by mistake for another woman.

" What other woman ? " demanded his Worship.

" Sorra wan o' me knows," answered Sarah, who came of Irish extraction.

* Scattering.

Her tale went that the previous evening, a little after twilight, she was walking up the street and had gone by the door of the Ship Inn, when a man staggered out into the roadway and followed her. By the sound of his footsteps she took him for some drunken sailor, and was hurrying on (but not fast, by reason of her clogs), when the man overtook her, flung an arm around her neck, and forcibly kissed her. Breaking away from him, she discovered it was her own husband.

"Then where's the harm?" asked the Mayor.

"But, please your Worship, he took me for another woman."

"Then you must cite the other woman."

"Arrah now, and how the divvle, saving your Worship's presence, will I cite the hussy, seein' I never clapt eyes on her?"

"No difficulty at all. To begin with, she was wearing clogs."

"And so would nine women out of ten be wearin' clogs in last night's weather."

"And next, she was lifting the skirt of her gown high, to let the folks admire her ankles."

"Your Worship saw the woman, then? If I'd known your Worship to be within hail—"

"I think I know the woman. And so do you, Mrs Mennear, if you can think of one in this town that's vain as yourself of her foot and ankle, and with as good a right."

"There's not one," said Mrs Mennear positively.

"Oh, yes, there is. Go back home, like a sensible soul, and maybe you'll find her there."

"The villain! Ye'll not be tellin' me he's dared—" Mrs Mennear came near to choke.

"And small blame to him," said the Mayor with a twinkle. "Will you go home, Sarah Mennear, and be humble, and ask her pardon?"

"Will I sclum * her eyes out, ye mane!" cried Sarah, fairly dancing.

"Go home, foolish wife!" The Mayor was not smiling now, and his voice took on a terrible sternness. "The woman I mean is the woman John Mennear married, or thought he married; the woman that aforetime had kept her own counsel though he caught and kissed her in a dimmety corner of the street; the woman that swore to love, honour and obey him, not she that tongue-drove him to the King of Prussia, with his own good liquor to keep him easy at home. Drunk he must have been to mistake the one for t'other; and I'm willing to fine him for drunkenness. But cite that other woman here before you ask me for a separation order, and I'll grant it; and I'll warrant when John sees you side by side, he won't oppose it."

. . . . . .

Here and there our Mayor had his detractors, no doubt. What public man has not? He incurred the reproach of pride, for instance, when he appeared, one wet day, carrying an umbrella, the first ever seen in Troy. A Guernsey merchant had presented him with this novelty (I may whisper here that our Mayor did something more than connive at the free trade) and patently it kept off the rain. But

* Scratch.

would it not attract the lightning? Many, even among his well-wishers, shook their heads. For their part they would have accepted the gift, but it should never have seen the light: they would have locked it away in their chests.

Oddly enough the Mayor nourished his severest censor in his own household. The rest of us might quote his wit, his wisdom, might defer to him as a being, if not superhuman, at least superlative among men; but Cai Tamblyn would have none of it. He had found one formula to answer all our praises.

"*Him?* Why, I knawed him when he was *so* high!"

Nor would he hesitate, in the Mayor's presence, from translating it into the second person.

"*You?* Why, I knawed you when you was *so* high!"

Yet the Mayor retained him in his service, which sufficiently proves his magnanimity.

He could afford to be magnanimous, being adored.

Who but he could have called a public meeting and persuaded the ladies of the town to enroll themselves in a brigade and patrol the cliffs in red cloaks during harvest, that the French, if perchance they approached our shores, might mistake them for soldiery? It was pretty, I tell you, to walk the coast-track on a warm afternoon and pass these sentinels two hundred yards apart, each busy with her knitting.

Of all the marks left on our town by Major Hymen's genius, the Port Hospital, or the idea of it, proved (as it deserved) to be the most enduring. The Looe Volunteers might pride themselves on their

longevity—at the best a dodging of the common lot. We, characteristically, thought first of death and wounds.

As the Major put it, at another public meeting: "There are risks even in handling the explosives generously supplied to us by Government. But suppose—and the supposition is surely not extravagant—that history should repeat itself; that our ancient enemy should once again, as in 1456, thunder at *this* gate of England. He will thunder in vain, gentlemen! (Loud applause.) As a wave from the cliff he will draw back, hissing, from the iron mouths of our guns. But, gentlemen"—here the Mayor sank his voice impressively—"we cannot have omelets without the breaking of eggs, nor victories without effusion of blood. He may leave prisoners in our hands: he will assuredly leave us with dead to bury, with wounded to care for. As masters of the field, we shall discharge these offices of common humanity, not discriminating between friend and foe. But in what position are we to fulfil them?"

The fact was (when we came to consider it) our prevision had extended no further than the actual combat: for its most ordinary results we had made no preparation at all.

But in Troy we are nothing if not thorough. The meeting appointed an Emergency Committee then and there; and the Committee, having retired to reassemble ten minutes later at the General Wolfe, within an hour sketched out the following proposals: —

1.—An Ambulance Corps to be formed of youths

under sixteen (not being bandsmen) and adults variously unfit for military service.

2.—A Corps of Female Nurses. Miss Pescod to be asked to organise.

3.—The Town lock-up to be enlarged by taking down the partition between it and a chamber formerly used by the Constable as a potato store. It was also resolved to strengthen the door and provide it with two new bolts and padlocks.

4.—The question of enlarging the Churchyard was deferred to the next (Easter) vestry.

5.—Subscriptions to be invited for providing a War Hospital. The Mayor, with Lawyer Chinn (Town Clerk) and Alderman Hansombody, to seek for suitable premises, and report.

Of Dr Hansombody I shall have more to tell anon. For the present let it suffice that before entering public life he had earned our confidence as an apothecary, and especially by his skill and delicacy in maternity cases.

These proposals were duly announced : and only if you know Troy can you conceive with what spirit the town flung itself into the task of making them effective. "Task," did I say ? When I tell you that at our next drill a parade of thirty-two stretchers followed us up to the Old Fort (still to the tune of "Come, Cheer Up, My Lads!") you may guess how far duty and pleasure had made accord.

The project of a hospital went forward more slowly ; but at length the Mayor and his Committee were able to announce that premises had been taken

on a lease of seven years (by which time an end to the war might reasonably be predicted) in Passage Street, as you go towards the ferry ; the exterior whitewashed and fitted with green jalousie shutters ; the interior also cleaned and whitewashed, and a ward opened with two beds. Though few enough to meet the contingencies of invasion, and a deal too few (especially while they remained unoccupied) to satisfy the zeal of Miss Pescod's corps of nurses (which by the end of the second week numbered forty-three, with sixteen probationary members), these two beds exhausted our subscriptions for the time. A Ladies' Thursday Evening Working Party supplied them with sheets, pillows and pillow-cases, blankets and coverlets (twenty-two coverlets).

The Institution, as we have seen, was intended for a War Hospital ; but pending invasion, and to get our nurses accustomed to the work, there seemed no harm in admitting as our first patient a sailor from Plymouth Dock who, having paid a lengthy call at the King of Prussia and drunk there exorbitantly, on the way to his ship had walked over the edge of the Town Quay. The tide being low, he had escaped drowning, but at the price of three broken ribs.

It is related of this man that early in his convalescence he sat up and demanded of the Visiting Committee (the Mayor and Miss Pescod) a translation of two texts which hung framed on the wall facing his bed. They had been illuminated by Miss Sally Tregentil at the instance of the Vicar (a Master of Arts of the University of Oxford)—the one, "*Parcere*

Subjectis," the other, "*Dulce et Decorum est Pro Patria Mori.*"

"Ah," said the Mayor, with a rallying glance at Miss Pescod, "that's more than any of us know. That's Latin!"

"Excuse me," put in Dr Hansombody, who had been measuring out a draught at the little table by the window, "I don't pretend to be a scholar; but I have made out the gist of them; and I understand them to recommend a gentle aperient in cases which at first baffle diagnosis."

"Ah!" was the Mayor's only comment.

"I don't profess mine to be more than a free rendering," went on the little apothecary. "The Latin, as you would suppose, puts it more poetically."

"Talking of texts," said the patient, leaning back wearily on his pillow, "there was a woman somewhere in the Bible who put her head out of window and recommended for every man a damsel or two and a specified amount of needlework. I ain't complainin', mind you; but there's reason in all things."

You have heard how our movement was launched. Where it would have ended none can tell, had not the Millennium interfered.

CHAPTER III

THE MILLENNIUM

ARISTOTLE has laid it down that the highest drama concerns itself with reversal of fortune befalling a man highly renowned and prosperous, of better character rather than worse; and brought about less by vice than by some great error or frailty. After all that has been said, you will wonder how I can admit a frailty in Major Hymen. But he had one.

You will wonder yet more when you hear it defined. Te tell the truth, he—our foremost citizen—yet missed being a perfect Trojan. We were far indeed from suspecting it: he was our fine flower, our representative man. Yet in the light of later events I can see now, and plainly enough, where he fell short.

A University Extension Lecturer who descended upon us the other day and, encouraged by the crowds that flocked to hear him discourse on English Miracle Plays, advertised a second series of lectures, this time on English Moralities, but only to find his audience diminished to one young lady (whom he promptly married)—this lecturer, I say, whose text-books indeed indicated several points of difference between the Miracle Play and the Morality, but nothing to account for so marked a subsidence in the

register, departed in a huff, using tart language and likening us to a pack of children blowing bubbles.

There is something in the fellow's simile. When an idea gets hold of us in Troy, we puff at it, we blow it out and distend it to a globe, pausing and calling on one another to mark the prismatic tints, the fugitive images, symbols, meanings of the wide world glassed upon our pretty toy. We launch it. We follow it with our eyes as it floats from us—an irrecoverable delight. We watch until the microcosm goes pop! Then we laugh and blow another.

That is where the fellow's simile breaks down. While the game lasts we are profoundly in earnest, serious as children: but each bubble as it bursts releases a shower of innocent laughter, flinging it like spray upon the sky. There in a chime it hangs for a moment, and so comes dropping—dropping—back to us until

"Quite through our streets, with silver sound"

the flood of laughter flows, and for weeks the narrow roadways, the quays, and alleys catch and hold its refluent echoes. Your true Trojan, in short, will don and doff his folly as a garment. Do you meet him, grave as a judge, with compressed lip and corrugated brow? Stand aside, I warn you: his fit is on him, and he may catch you up with him to heights where the ridiculous and the sublime are one and all the Olympians as drunk as Chloe. Better, if you have no head for heights, wait and listen for the moment—it will surely come—when the bubble cracks, and with a laugh he is sane, hilariously sane.

Just here it was that our Mayor fell out with our *genius loci*. He could smile—paternally, magisterially, benignantly, gallantly, with patronage, in deprecation, compassionately, disdainfully (as when he happened to mention Napoleon Bonaparte); subtly and with intention; or frankly, in mere *bonhomie;* as a Man, as a Major, as a Mayor. But he was never known to laugh.

Through this weakness he fell. But he was a great man, and it took the Millennium—nothing less—to undo him.

Here let me say, once for all, that the Millennium was no invention of ours. It started with the Vicar of Helleston, and we may wash our hands of it.

On the first Sunday of January 1800, the Vicar of Helleston, (an unimportant town in the extreme south-west of Cornwall, near the Lizard) preached a sermon which, at the request of a few parishioners, he afterwards published under the title of *Reflections on the New Century*. In delight, no doubt, at finding himself in print, he sent complimentary copies to a number of his fellow-clergy, and, among others, to the Vicar of Troy.

Our Vicar, being a scholar and a gentleman, but a determined foe to loose thinking (especially in Cambridge men), courteously acknowledged the gift, but took occasion to remind his brother of Helleston that Reflection was a retrospective process; that Man, as a finite creature, could but anticipate events before they happened; and that if the parishioners of Helleston wished to reflect on the New Century

they would have to wait until January 1901, or something more than a hundred years.

The Vicar of Helleston replied, tacitly admitting his misuse of language, but demanding to know if in the Vicar of Troy's opinion the new century would begin on January 1st, 1801 : for his own part he had supposed, and was prepared to maintain, that it had begun on January 1st, 1800.

To this the Vicar of Troy retorted that undoubtedly the new century would begin on the first day of January 1801, and that anyone who held another opinion must suffer from confusion of mind.

The Vicar of Helleston stuck to his contention, and a terrific correspondence ensued. With the arguments exchanged—which tended more and more to appeal from common-sense to metaphysics—we need not concern ourselves. The most of them reappeared the other day (1900-1901) in the public press, and will doubtless reappear at the alleged beginning of every century to come. But in his sixth letter the Vicar of Helleston opened what I may call a masked battery.

He said—and I believe the fellow had been leading up to this from the start—that he desired to thresh the question out not only on general grounds, but officially as Vicar of Helleston ; since he had reason to believe that a certain day in the opening year of the new century would bring a term to the Millennium ; that the Millennium had begun in Helleston close on a thousand years ago ; and that (as he calculated, on the 8th of May next approaching) Satan might reasonably be expected to regain his liberty

(*see* Revelation xx.). For evidence he adduced a local tradition that in his parish the Archangel Michael (whose Mount stands at no great distance) had met and defeated the Prince of Darkness, had cast him into a pit, and had sealed the pit with a great stone ; which stone might be seen by any visitor on application to the landlord of the Angel Inn and payment of a trifling fee. Moreover, the stone was black as your hat (unless you were a free-thinking Radical and wore a white one ; in which case it was blacker). He pointed out that the name of Helleston —*i.q.*, Hell's Stone — corroborated this tradition. He went on to say that annually, on the 8th of May, from time immemorial his parishioners had met in the streets and engaged in a public dance which either commemorated mankind's deliverance from the Spirit of Evil, or had no meaning at all.

The Vicar of Troy, warming to this new contention, riposted in masterly style. He answered Helleston's claim to a monopoly, or even a predominant interest, in the Devil by pelting his opponent with Devil's Quoits, Devil's Punch-bowls, Walking-sticks, Frying-pans, Pudding-dishes, Ploughshares ; Devil's Strides, Jumps, Footprints, Fingerprints ; Devil's Hedges, Ditches, Ridges, Furrows ; Devil's Cairns, Cromlechs, Wells, Monoliths, Caves, Castles, Cliffs, Chasms ; Devil's Heaths, Moors, Downs, Commons, Copses, Furzes, Marshes, Bogs, Streams, Sands, Quicksands, Estuaries, ; Devil's High-roads, By-roads, Lanes, Footpaths, Stiles, Gates, Smithies, Cross-roads ; from every corner of the Duchy. He matched Helleston's May-dance with at least a score

of similar May-day observances in different towns and villages of Cornwall. He quoted the Padstow Hobby-horse, the Towedneck Cuckoo-feast, the Madron Dipping Day, the Troy May-dragon, and proved that the custom of ushering in the summer with song and dance and some symbolical rite of purgation was well-nigh universal throughout Cornwall. He followed the custom overseas, to Brittany, Hungary, the Black Forest, Moldavia, Lithuania, Poland, Finland, the Caucasus. . . . He wound up by sardonically congratulating the worthy folk of Helleston : if the events of the past thousand years satisfied their notion of a Millennium, they were easily pleased.

And then—

Well, the next thing to happen was that the Vicar of Helleston published a pamphlet of 76 pages 8vo, entitled *Considerations Proper to the New Century, with some Reflections on the Millennium.* Note, pray, the artfulness of the title, and, having noted it, let us pass on. Our Vicar did not trouble to reply, being off by this time on a scent of his own.

The dispute had served its purpose. On the morning of March 25th, 1804, he knocked at the Major's door, and, pushing past Scipio, rushed into the breakfast-parlour unannounced.

" My dear Vicar ! What has happened ? Surely the French—" The Major bounced up from his chair, napkin in hand.

" The Millennium, Major ! I have it, I tell you ! "

Miss Marty sat down the tea-pot with a trembling hand. She was always timid of infectious disease.

"O—oh!" The Major's tone expressed his relief. "I thought for the moment—and you not shaved this morning—"

"The fellow had hold of the stick all the while. I'll do him that credit. He had hold of the stick, but at the wrong end. I've been working it out, and 'tis plain (excuse me) as the nose on your face. The moment you see 'Napoleon' with the numbers under him—"

"Eh? Then it *is* the French!" Again the Major bounced up from his chair.

"The French? Yes, of course—but, excuse me—"

"*What* numbers?" The Major's voice shook, though he bravely tried to control it.

"Six hundred—"

"Good Lord! *Where?*"

"—and sixty and six. In Revelation thirteen, eighteen—I thought you knew," went on the Vicar reproachfully, as his friend dropped back upon his chair, and, resting an elbow on the table, shaded his eyes and their emotion. "As I can now prove to you in ten minutes, the Corsican's name spells accurately the Number of the Beast. But that's only the beginning. Power, you remember, was given to the Beast to continue forty and two months. Add forty and two months to the first day of the century, which I have shown to be January 1st, 1801, and you come to May 1st, 1804: that is to say, next May-day. You perceive the significance of the date?"

"Not entirely," confessed the Major, still a trifle pale.

"Why, my dear sir, all these rites and customs over which the Vicar of Helleston and I have been disputing—these May-day observances, in themselves apparently so puerile but so obviously symbolical to one who looks below the surface—turn out to be not retrospective, not reminiscent, not commemorative at all, but anticipatory. On every 1st of May our small urchins form a dragon or devil out of old pots and saucepans, and flog it through the streets. *Ex ore infantium*—on the 1st of May next (mark my words) we shall see Satan laid hold upon and bound for a thousand years."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed the Major once again.

"In the middle of spring-cleaning, too!" quavered Miss Marty.

"You'll find it as clear as daylight," the Vicar assured them, pulling out a pocket Testament and tapping the open page.

"Will it," the Major began timorously, "will it make an appreciable difference?"

"To what?"

"To—to our daily life—our routine? Call it humdrum, if you will—"

"My good friend, the Millennium!"

"I know, I know. Still, at my age a man has formed habits. Of course"—the Major pulled himself together—"if it's a question of Satan's being bound for a thousand years, on general grounds one can only approve. Yes, decidedly, on principle one welcomes it. Nevertheless, coming so suddenly—"

The Vicar tapped his Testament again. "It has been *here* all the time."

" Yes, yes," the Major sighed impatiently. " Still it's upsetting, you'll admit."

" The end of the world ! " Miss Marty gripped her apron, as if to cast it over her head.

" The Millennium, Miss Marty, is not the end of the world."

" Oh, isn't it ? "

" It merely means that Satan will be bound for a thousand years to come."

" If that's all "—Miss Marty walked to the bell-rope—" there's no harm in ringing for Scipio to bring in the omelet."

" I beg your pardon ? " The Vicar, not for the first time, found it difficult to follow Miss Marty's train of thought.

" Scipio never repeats what he hears at table : I'll say that for him. And I believe in feeding people up."

The Vicar turned to Major Hymen, who had pushed back his chair and was staring at the table-cloth from under a puckered brow.

" I fear this has come upon you somewhat suddenly, but my first thought, as soon as I had convinced myself—"

" Thank you, Vicar. I appreciate that, of course."

" And, after all—when you come to think of it—an event of this magnitude, happening in your mayoralty—"

" Will they knight him, do you think ? " asked Miss Marty.

While the Vicar considered his answer, on top of this interruption came another—Scipio entering

with the omelet. Now the entrance of the Major's omelet was a daily ritual. It came on a silver dish, heated by a small silver spirit-lamp, on a tray covered by a spotless linen cloth. Scipio, its cook and compounder, bore it with professional pride, supporting the dish on one palm bent backwards, and held accurately level with his shoulder ; whence, by a curious and quite indescribable turn of the wrist (Scipio was double-jointed), during which for one fearful tenth of a second they seemed to hang upside down, he would bring tray, lamp, dish and omelet down with a sweep, and deposit them accurately in front of the Major's plate, at the same instant bringing his heels together and standing at attention for his master's approval.

" Well done, Scipio ! " the Major would say, nine days out of ten.

But to-day he pushed the tray from him pettishly, ignoring Scipio.

" You'll excuse me "—he turned to the Vicar— " but if what you say is correct (you may go, Scipio) it puts me in a position of some responsibility."

" I felt sure you would see it in that light. It's a responsibility for me, too."

" To-day is the twenty-fifth. We have little more than a month."

" What am I to say in church next Sunday ? "

" Why, as for that, you must say nothing. Good Heavens ! is this a time for adding to the disquietude of men's minds ? "

" I had thought," the Vicar confessed, " of memorialising the Government."

"Addington!" The Major's tone whenever he had occasion to mention Mr Addington was a study in scornful expression. He himself had once memorialised the Prime Minister for a couple of nineteen-pounders which, with the two on the Old Fort, would have made our harbour impregnable. "Addington! It's hard on you, I know," he went on sympathetically, "to keep a discovery like this to yourself. But we might tell Hansombody."

"Why Hansombody?" For the second time a suspicion crossed the Vicar's mind that his hearers were confusing the Millennium with some infectious ailment.

"It is bound to affect his practice," suggested Miss Marty.

"To be sure," the Major chimed in. As a matter of fact, he attached great importance to the apothecary's judgment, and was wont to lean on it, though not too ostentatiously. "It can hardly fail to affect his practice. I think, in common justice, Hansombody ought to be told; that is, if you are quite sure of your ground."

"Sure?" The Vicar opened his Testament afresh and plunged into an explanation. "And forty-two months," he wound up, "are forty-two months, unless you prefer to fly in the face of Revelation."

His demonstration fairly staggered the Major. "My good sir, *where* did you say? Patmos? Now, if anyone had come to me a week ago and told me—Martha, ring for Scipio, please, and tell him to fetch me my hat."

Although the Major and the Vicar had as good as

made solemn agreement to impart their discovery to no one but Mr Hansombody ; and, although Miss Marty admittedly (and because, as she explained, no one had forbidden her) imparted it to Scipio and again to Cai Tamblyn in the course of the morning, yet, knowing Troy, I hesitate to blame her that before noon the whole town was discussing the Millennium, notice of which (it appeared) had come down to the Mayor by a private advice and in Government cipher.

" But what *is* a Millennium ? " asked someone of Gunner Sobey (our readiest man).

" It means a thousand years," answered Gunner Sobey ; " and then, if you're lucky, you get's a pension accordin'."

Miss Marty confessed later that she had confided the secret to Scipio. Now Scipio, a sentimental soul, cherished a passion. In church every Sunday he sat behind his master and in full view of a board on the wall of the south aisle whereon in scarlet letters on a buff ground were emblazoned certain bequests and charities left to the parish by the pious dead. The churchwardens who had set up this list, with the date, September 1757, and attested it with their names, had prudently left a fair blank space thereunder for additions. Often, during the Vicar's sermons, poor Scipio's gaze had dwelt on this blank space. Maybe the scarlet lettering above it fascinated him. Negroes are notoriously fond of scarlet. But out upon me for so mean a guess at his motives ! Scipio, regarding this board Sunday by Sunday, saw in imagination his own name added to

that glorious roll. He had a few pounds laid by. He owned neither wife nor child. Why should it not be? He was black: but a black man's money passed current as well as a white man's. Might not his name, Scipio Johnson, stand some day and be remembered as well as that of Joshua Milliton, A.M. (whatever A.M. might mean), who in 1714 had bequeathed moneys to provide, every Whit-Sunday and Christmas, "twelve white loaves of half a peck to as many virtuous poor widows"?

So when Miss Marty confided the news to him in the pantry where, as always at ten in the morning, he was engaged in cleaning the plate, Scipio's hand shook so violently that the silver sugar-basin slipped from his hold and, crashing down upon the breakfast-tray, broke two cups and the slop-basin into small fragments.

"Oh, Scipio!" Miss Marty's two hands went up in horrified dismay. "How could you be so careless!"

"The Millennium, miss!"

"We can never replace it—never!"

Scipio gazed at the tray: but what he saw was a shattered dream—a cracked board strewn with fragmentary scarlet letters and flourishes "brief flourishes." "Ole man Satan is among us sho 'nuff, Miss Marty: among us and kickin' up Saint's Delight, because his time is short. I was jes' thinkin' of the widows, miss."

"You have spoilt the set . . . eh? *what* widows? You don't mean to tell me that Satan—?"

Miss Marty broke off and gazed at Scipio with

dawning suspicion, distrust, apprehension. She had never completely reconciled herself with the poor fellow's colour. The Major, in moments of irritation, would address him as "You black limb of Satan." He came from the Gold Coast, and she had heard strange stories of that happily distant, undesirable shore; stories of devil-worship, and—was it there they practised suttee? What did he mean by that allusion to widows? And why had he turned pale—yes, pale—when she announced the Evil One's approaching overthrow?

Miss Marty left him to pick up the pieces, and withdrew in some haste to the kitchen. Then, half an hour later, while rolling out the paste for a pie-crust, she imparted the news to Lavinia.

"It's to happen on May-day, Lavinia. The Major had word of it this morning, and—only think! —Satan is to be bound for a thousand years."

"Law, miss!" said Lavinia. "Apprentice?"

Cai Tamblyn heard of it in the garden, which was really a small flagged courtyard leading to the terrace, which again was really a small, raised platform with a table and a couple of chairs, where the Major sometimes smoked his pipe and overlooked the harbour and the shipping. Along each side of the courtyard ran a flower-bed, and in these Cai Tamblyn grew tulips and verbenas, according to the season, and kept them scrupulously weeded. He was stooping over his tulips when Miss Marty told him of the Millennium.

"What's that?" he asked, picking up a slug and jerking it across the harbour wall.

"It's a totally different thing from the end of the world. To begin with, Satan is to be taken and bound for a thousand years."

"Oh!" said Cai Tamblyn with fine contempt. "*Him!*"

CHAPTER IV

HOW THE TROY GALLANTS CHALLENGED THE LOOE DIEHARDS

THAT it was the Major's idea goes without saying. At Looe they had neither the originality for it nor the enterprise.

I have already told you with what sardonic emphasis he quoted the saying that 'twas hardly worth while for Great Britain to go to war merely to prove that she could put herself in a good posture for defence. The main secret of strategy, he would add, is to impose your idea of the campaign on your enemy ; to take the initiative out of his hands ; to throw him on the defensive and keep him nervously speculating what move of yours may be a feint and what a real attack. If the Ministry had given the Major his head, so to speak, Agincourt at least might have been repeated.

But since it enforced him to wait on the enemy's movements, at least (said he) let us be sure that our defence is secure. Concerning the Troy battery he had not a doubt ; but over the defences of Looe he could not but feel perturbed. To be sure, Looe's main battery stood out of reach of harm, but with the compensating disadvantage of being able to inflict none. This seemed to him a grave engineering blunder : but to impart his misgivings to an officer

so sensitive as Captain Æneas Pond of the East and West Looe Volunteer Artillery was a delicate matter, and cost him much anxious thought.

At length he hit on a plan at once tactful and so bold that it concealed his tact. Between Looe and Troy, but much nearer to Looe, lies Talland Cove, a pretty recess of the coast much favoured in those days by smugglers as being lonely and well sheltered, with a nicely shelving beach on which, at almost any state of the tide, an ordinary small boat could be run and her cargo discharged with the greatest ease. A shelving ridge on the eastern side of the cove had only to be known to be avoided, and the run of sea upon the beach could be disregarded in any but a strong southerly wind.

Now, where the free-traders could so easily land a cargo, it stood to reason that Bonaparte (were he so minded) could land an invading force. Nay, once on a time the French had actually forced this very spot. A short way up the valley behind the cove stood a mill; and of that mill this story was told. About the time of the Wars of the Roses, the miller there gave entertainment to a fellow-miller from the Breton coast opposite, who had crossed over—or so he pretended—to learn by what art the English ground finer corn than the French. Coming by hazard to this mill above Talland, he was well entertained for a month or more and dismissed with a blessing; but only to return to his own country, collect a band of men and cross to Talland Cove, where on a Christmas Eve he surprised his late host at supper, bound him, haled him down to the shore,

carried him off to Brittany, and there held him at ransom. The ransom was paid, and our Cornish miller, returning, built himself a secret cupboard behind the chimney for a hiding-place against another such mishap. That hiding-place yet existed, and formed (as the Major well knew) a capital store-chamber for the free-traders.

The Major, then, having carefully studied Talland Cove, with its approaches, and the lie of the land to the east and west and immediately behind it, sat down and indited the following letter :—

"Dear Pond,—I have been thinking over the military situation, and am of opinion that if the enemy once effected a lodgment in Looe, we in Troy might have difficulty in dislodging him. Have you considered the danger of Talland Cove and the accessibility of your town from that quarter? And would you and your corps entertain the idea of a descent of my corps upon Talland one of these nights as a friendly test?—Believe me, yours truly,

"Sol. Hymen (*Major*).

"To Captain Æneas Pond, Commanding the East and West Looe Volunteer Artillery."

To this Captain Pond made answer :—

"Dear Hymen,—The military situation here is practically unchanged. We have had some bronchial trouble among the older members of the corps in consequence of the severe east winds which prevailed up to last week; but on the whole we have weathered the winter beyond expectation. A slight

outbreak of whooping-cough towards the end of February was confined to the juveniles of the town, and left us unaffected.

"Seeing that I make a practice of walking over to Talland to bathe at least twice a week during the summer months, I ought to be acquainted with the dangers of the Cove, as well as its accessibility. The temperature of the water is of extraordinarily low range, and will compare in the mean (I am told) with the Bay of Naples. My informant was speaking of ordinary years. Vesuvius in eruption would no doubt send the figures up.

"By all means march your men over to Talland; and if the weather be tolerable we will await you there and have a dinner ready at the Sloop. Our Assurance Fund has a surplus this year, which, in my opinion, would be well expended in entertaining our brothers-in-arms. But do not make the hour too late, or I shall have trouble with the Doctor. What do you say to 3.30 p.m., any day after this week?—Yours truly, ÆN. POND.

"To the Worshipful the Mayor of Troy (Major S. Hymen), Commanding the Troy Volunteer Artillery."

The Major replied:—

"DEAR POND,—In speaking of the enemy, I referred to the Corsican and his minions rather than to the whooping-cough or any similar epidemic. It struck me that the former (being flat-bottomed) might with great ease effect a landing in Talland Cove and fall on your flank in the small hours of the morning, creating a situation with which, single-

handed, you might find it difficult to cope. My suggestion then would be that, as a test, we arranged a night together for a surprise attack, our corps here acting as a friendly foe.

"With so gallant an enemy I feel a diffidence in discussing the bare contingency of our success. But it may reassure the non-combatant portion of your population in East and West Looe if I add that 72 *per centum* of my corps are married men, and that I accept no recruit without careful inquiry into character.

"By direct assault I know you to be impregnable. The reef off your harbour would infallibly wreck any ship that tried to approach within the range of your battery (270 point-blank, I believe); and my experience with a picnic party last summer convinced me that to discharge the complement of even half a dozen boats by daylight on your quay requires a degree of method which in a night attack would almost certainly be lacking. Our boats would not be flat-bottomed, but only partially so: enough for practical purposes.

"I do not apprehend any casualties. With a little forethought we may surely avoid the confusion incident to a night surprise, while carrying it out in all essentials. But I may mention that we have a well-found hospital in Troy, that we should bring our own stretcher-party, and that our honorary surgeon, Mr Hansombody, is a licentiate of the Apothecaries' Hall, in London.—I am, my dear Pond, yours truly,

"Sol. Hymen (*Major*)."

"Confound this fire-eater!" sighed Captain Pond.

"I knew, when they told me he had founded a hospital, he wouldn't be satisfied till he'd filled it." Yet he could scarcely decline the challenge.

"MY DEAR MAJOR,—In these critical times, when Great Britain calls upon her sons to consolidate their ranks in face of the Invader, I should have thought it wiser to keep as many as possible in health and fighting condition than to incur the uncertain risks of such a nocturnal adventure as you propose. I think it due to myself to make this clear, and you will credit me that I have, or had, no other reason for demurring. It does not become me, however, to argue with my superior in military rank; and again the tone of your last communication makes it impossible for me to decline without bringing the spirit of my Corps under suspicion. I cannot do them this injustice. His Majesty, I dare to say, has no braver, no more gallant subjects, than the inhabitants of East and West Looe; and if, or when, you choose to invade us you may count on a determined resistance and, at its conclusion, on a hearty invitation to supper, or breakfast, as the length of the operations may dictate.—I am, yours truly,

"ÆN. POND (*Capt.* E. and W.L.V.A.)

"*P.S.*—If you will accept a suggestion, it is that on the night of the 30th of April, or in the early hours of May morning, large numbers of our inhabitants fare out to the neighbouring farmhouse to eat cream and observe other unwholesome but primitive and interesting ceremonies before day-break. A similar custom, I hear, prevails at Troy. Now it

occurs to me that if we agreed upon that date for our surprise attack, we should, so to speak, be killing two birds with one stone, and at a season when the night air in some degree loses its insalubrity.

"*P.P.S.*—You will, of course, take care—it is the essence of our agreement—that all ammunition shall be strictly blank. And pray bring your full band. Though superfluous before and during the surprise, their strains will greatly enhance the subsequent festivities."

Thus did Captain Pond accept our challenge. The Major acknowledged its acceptance in the following brief note :—

"My dear Pond,—Your letter has highly gratified me. Between this and April 30th I will make occasion to meet you and arrange details. Meanwhile, could you discover and send the correct words and tune of an old song I remember hearing sung, when I was a boy, in honour of your town ? It was called, I think, 'The George of Looe' ; and if between this and then our musicians learnt to play it, I daresay your men would appreciate the compliment from their (temporary) foes.—Yours truly,

"Sol. Hymen (*Major*)."

But this was before our Vicar's announcement of the Millennium.

Captain Pond promised to obtain, if possible, the words and music of the old song. "Courtesies such as yours," he wrote, "refine the spirit, while they mitigate the ferocity, of warfare."

CHAPTER V

INTERFERENCE OF A GUERNSEY MERCHANT

A SMALLER man than Major Hymen—I allude to character rather than to stature—had undoubtedly postponed a military manœuvre on finding it likely to clash with the Millennium, an event so incalculable and conceivably so disconcerting to the best-laid plans: and, indeed, for something like forty-eight hours the Major was in two minds about writing to Captain Pond and hinting at a postponement.

But in the end he characteristically chose the stronger line. I believe the handsome language of Captain Pond's last letter decided him. His was no cheap imitation of the grand manner. Magnificently, spaciously—too spaciously, perhaps, considering the width of our streets—it enshrined a real conception of Man's proper dignity. Here was an obligation in which honour met and competed with politeness: and he must fulfil it though the heavens fell. Moreover, he could not but be aware, during the month of April, that the town had its eye on him, hoping for a sign. He and the Vicar and Mr Hansombody had bound each other to secrecy; nevertheless some inkling of the secret had leaked out. The daily current of gossip in the streets no longer kept its cheerful, equable flow. Citizens

avoided each other's eyes, and talked either in hushed voices or with an almost febrile vehemence on any subject but that which lay closest to their thoughts.

But never did our Mayor display such strength, such unmistakable greatness, as during this, the last month—alas !—fate granted us to possess him. Men eyed him on his daily walk, but he for his part eyed the weather : and the weather continued remarkably fine for the time of year.

So warm, so still, indeed, were the evenings, that in the third week of April he began to take his dessert, after dinner, out of doors on the terrace overlooking the harbour ; and would sit and smoke there, alone with a book, until the shadows gathered and it grew too dark to read print.

" And you may tell Scipio to bring me out a bottle of the green-sealed Madeira," he commanded, on the evening of the twentieth.

" The green-sealed Madeira ? " echoed Miss Marty. " You know, of course, that there is but a dozen or so left ? "

" A dozen precisely ; and to-day is the twentieth. That leaves "—the Major drummed with his fingers on the mahogany—" a bottle a night and one over. That last one I reserve to drink on the evening of May-day if all goes well. One must risk something."

" Solomon ! "

" Eh ? " The Major looked up in surprise. Although a kinswoman, Miss Marty had never before dared to address him by his Christian name. " One must risk something ; or rather, I should say, one

must leave a margin. If Hansombody calls, you may send out the brown sherry."

"Forgive me, cousin. I see you going about your daily business, calm and collected, as though no shadow hung over us—"

"A man in my position has certain responsibilities, my dear Martha."

"Yes, yes; I admire you for it. Do not think that for one moment I have failed in paying you that tribute. I often wish," pursued Miss Marty, somewhat incoherently, "that I had been born a man. I trust the aspiration is not unwomanly. I see you going about as if nothing were happening or likely to happen, and me all the while half dead in my bed, and hearing the clock strike and expecting it every moment. As if the French weren't bad enough! And the Vicar may say what he likes, but when I hear you ordering up the green-sealed Madeira I know you're like me, and in your heart of hearts can't see much difference between it and the end of the world, for all the brave face you put on it. Oh, I daresay it's different when one happens to be a man," wound up Miss Marty, "but what *I* want to know is why couldn't we be let alone and go on comfortably?"

The Major rose and flicked a crumb or two from the knees of his pantaloons. For the moment he seemed about to answer her, but thought better of it and left the room without speech, taking his napkin with him.

To tell the truth, he had been near to giving way. In his heart he echoed Miss Marty's protest; and

it touched him with an accent of reproach—faint indeed; an accent and no more—which yet he had detected and understood. Was he not in some sort responsible? Would the Millennium be imminent to-day—or, if imminent, would it be wearing so momentous an aspect?—if at the last Mayor-choosing he had modestly declined to be re-elected (for the fifth successive year), and had stood aside in favour of some worthy but less eminent citizen? Hansombody, for instance? Hansombody admired him, idolised him, with a devotion almost canine. Yet Hansombody might be expected to cherish hopes of the mayoral succession sooner or later, for one brief year at any rate; and for a few moments after acceding for the sixth time to the unanimous request of the burgesses, the Major had almost fancied that Hansombody's feelings were hurt. Hansombody would have made a competent mayor; provoking comparison, of course, but certainly not provoking the jealousy of the gods. It is notoriously the mountain top, the monarch oak that attracts the lightning. Impossible to think of Hansombody attracting the lightning, with his bedside manner!

The Major seated himself in his favourite chair on the terrace, spread his napkin over his knees and mused, while Scipio set out the decanters and glasses.

His gaze, travelling over the low parapet of the quay-wall, rested on the quiet harbour, the ships swinging slowly with the tide, the farther shore touched with the sunset glory. Evensong, the close of day, the end of deeds, the twilit passing of man—all these the scene, the hour suggested. And yet

(the Major poured out a glass of the green-sealed Madeira) this life was good and desirable.

The Major's garden (as I have said) was a narrow one, in width about half the depth of his house, terminating in the "Terrace" and a narrow quay-door, whence a ladder led down to the water. Alongside this garden ran the rear wall of the Custom House, which abutted over the water, also with a ladder reaching down to the foreshore, and not five yards from the Mayor's. On the street side one window of the Custom House raked the Mayor's porch; in the rear another and smaller window overlooked his garden, and this might have been a nuisance had the Collector of Customs, Mr Pennefather, been a less considerate neighbour. But no one minded Mr Pennefather, a little, round, self-deprecating official who, before coming to Troy, had served as clerk in the Custom House at Penzance, and so, as you might say, had learnt his business in a capital school: for the good feeling between the Customs' officials and the free-traders of Mount's Bay, and the etiquette observed in their encounters, were a by-word throughout the Duchy.

The Major, glancing up as he sipped his Madeira and catching sight of Mr Pennefather at his window, nodded affably.

"Ah! Good-evening, Mr Collector!"

"Good-evening, Major! You'll excuse my seeming rudeness in overlooking you. To tell the truth, I had just closed my books, and the sight of your tulips—"

"A fair show this year—eh?" The Major took pride in his tulips.

"Magnificent! I was wondering how you will manage when the bulbs deteriorate; for, of course, there's no renewing them from Holland, nor any prospect of it while this war lasts."

The Major sipped his wine. "Between ourselves, Mr Collector, I have heard that forbidden goods find their way into this country somehow. Eh?"

The Collector laughed. "But the price, Major? That is where it hits us, even in the matter of tulips. War is a terrible business."

"It has been called the sport of kings," answered the Major, crossing his legs with an air of careless greatness, and looking more like the Prince Regent than ever.

"I have sometimes wondered, being of a reflective turn, on the—er—far-reaching consequences of events which, to the casual eye, might appear insignificant. An infant is born in the remote island of Corsica. Years roll on, and we find our gardens denuded of a bulb, the favourite habitat of which must lie at least eight hundred miles from Corsica as the crow flies. How unlikely was it, sir, that you or I, considering these tulips with what I may perhaps call our finite intelligence—"

"Step around, Mr Collector, and have a look at them. You can unfold your argument over a glass of wine, if you will do me that pleasure." The Major had a high opinion of Mr Pennefather's conversation; he was accustomed to say that it made you think.

"If you are sure, sir, it will not incommode you?"

"Not in the least. I expect Hansombody will

join us presently. Scipio, bring out the brown sherry."

Now the Major had not invited Dr Hansombody ; yet that he expected him is no less certain than that, while he spoke, Dr Hansombody was actually lifting the knocker of the front door.

How did this happen ? The Major—so used was he to the phenomenon—accepted it as a matter of course. Hansombody (good soul !) had a wonderful knack of turning up when wanted. But what attracted him ? Was it perchance that magnetic force of will which our Major, and all truly great men, unconsciously exert ? No ; the explanation was a simpler one, though the Major would have been inexpressibly shocked had he suspected it.

Miss Marty and Dr Hansombody were mutually enamoured.

They never told their love. To acknowledge it nakedly to one another—nay, even to themselves—had been treason. What ? Could Miss Marty disturb the comfort, could her swain destroy the confidence, could they together forfeit the esteem, of their common hero ? In converse they would hymn antiphonally his virtues, his graces of mind and person ; even as certain heathen fanatics, wounding themselves in honour of their idol, will drown the pain by loud clashings of cymbals.

They never told their love, and yet, as the old song says,—

> "But if ne'er so close ye wall him,
> Do the best that ye may,
> Blind Love, if so ye call him,
> He will find out his way."

Miss Marty had found out a way.

The Major's house, as you have been told, looked down the length of Fore Street ; and on the left hand (the harbour side) of Fore Street, at some seventy yards' distance, Dr Hansombody resided over his dispensary, or, as he preferred to call it, his " Medical Hall." The house stood aligned with its neighbours but overtopped them by an attic storey ; and in the north side of this attic a single window looked up the street to the Major's windows—Miss Marty's among the rest—and was visible from them.

Behind this attic window the Doctor, when released from professional labours, would sit and read or busy himself in arranging his cases of butterflies, of which he had a famous collection ; and somehow —I cannot tell you when or how, except that it began in merest innocence—Miss Marty had learnt to signal with her window-blind and the Doctor to reply with his. This evening, for instance, by lowering her blind to the foot of the second pane from the top, Miss Marty had telegraphed,—

" The Major requests you to call and take wine with him."

The Doctor drew his blind down rapidly and as rapidly raised it again. This said, " I come at once," and Miss Marty knew that it added, " On the wings of love ! "

A slight agitation of the lower left-hand corner of her blind supplemented the message thus,—

" There will be brown sherry."

" Then will I also call to-morrow," said the Doctor's blind, roguishly, meaning that if the Major

indulged in brown sherry (which never agreed with him) this convivial visit would almost certainly be followed by a professional one. Miss Marty, having no signal for the green-sealed Madeira, postponed explanation, and drew her blind midway down the window. The Doctor did the same with his. This signal and its answer invariably closed their correspondence ; but what it meant, what tender message it conveyed, remained an uncommunicated secret. By it Miss Marty—but shall I reveal the arcana of that virgin breast ? Let us be content to know that whatever it conveyed was, on her part, womanly ; on his, gallant and even dashing.

The Doctor lost no time in fetching his hat and gold-topped cane. He knew the Major's brown sherry ; it had twice made a voyage to the West Indies. He hied him up the street with alacrity.

The Collector, though he had the worse of the start, was not slow. He also had tasted the Major's brown sherry. He closed his ledgers, locked his desk, caught up his hat, and was closing the Custom House door behind him when, from the top of the Custom House steps, he saw the Major's door open to admit Dr Hansombody.

Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy and pursue in imagination the pleasures of hope, attend to the story of Dr Hansombody, Mr Pennefather, and the brown sherry !

" Dr Hansombody ? " With her own hand Miss Marty opened the door, and her start of surprise was admirably affected. (Ah, Miss Marty ! Who was it rated Lavinia this morning for a verbal fib, until

the poor child dropped her head upon the kitchen table and with sobs confessed herself the chief of sinners ?) But even as she welcomed the apothecary, her gaze fell past him upon the form of a stranger who, sauntering up the street, had paused at the gate to scan the Major's house-front.

" I ask your pardon." The stranger, a long, lean, lantern-jawed man, raised his hat and addressed her with a strong French accent. " But does Mr Hymen inhabit here ? "

" Yes, sir ; Major Hymen—that is to say the Mayor—lives here."

" Ah ! he is also the Maire ? So much the better." He drew out a card. " Will it please you, mademoiselle, to convey this to him ? "

Standing on the third step he held up the card. Miss Marty took it and read, " M. Cesar Dupin."

" Of Guernsey," added M. Dupin, rubbing his long unshaven chin while he stole a long look at the Doctor. " It is understood that I come only to lodge a complaint."

" To be sure—to be sure," agreed the Doctor, hurriedly. " A Guernsey merchant," he whispered. . . . " You will convey my excuses to the Major ; an unexpected visitor—I quite understand."

He made a motion to retire. At the same moment the Collector, after scanning the stranger from the Custom House porch, himself unseen, unlocked his door again without noise, re-entered his office and delicately drew down the blind of the little window overlooking the Major's garden.

" There is the parlour," Miss Marty made answer

in an undertone. "This gentleman may not detain the Major long." She turned to the stranger. "Your business, sir, is doubtless private?"

"I should prefer."

"Quite so." She raised her voice and called, "Scipio! Scipio! Ah, there you are! Take this gentleman's card out to the terrace and inform the Major that he desires an interview."

. . . . . .

"Why, hullo!" exclaimed the Major, glancing up at the sound of a blind being drawn above, in the Custom House window. "What the deuce is delaying Pennefather?"

While he speculated, Scipio emerged from the house, bearing in one hand a decanter of brown sherry, and in the other a visitor's card.

"Eh—what? M. Cesar Dupin?" The Major, holding the card almost at arm's length, conned it with a puzzled frown.

"From Guernsey, Major."

"Good Lord! And I've just invited Pennefather!" The Major rose half-way from his chair with a face of dismay.

Scipio glanced up at the Custom House window. He, too, had caught the sound of the drawn blind.

"Mas' Pennefather, Major, if you'll excuse me, he see a hole t'ro' a ladder, but not t'ro' a brick wall. Shall I show the genelman in?"

. . . . . .

"I fear," began Miss Marty, as the Doctor took a seat in the parlour, "I greatly fear that Scipio has carried the brown sherry out to the terrace."

Dr Hansombody smiled as a lover but sighed as a connoisseur.

"There is the Fra Angelico, however." She stepped to a panelled cupboard on the right of the chimney-piece. "Made from my own recipe," she added archly.

The Doctor lifted a hand in faint protest; but already she had set a glass before him. He knew the Fra Angelico of old. It was a specific against catarrh, and he had more than once prescribed it for Scipio.

"Wine is wine," continued Miss Marty, reaching down the bottle. "And, after all, when one knows what it is made of, as in this case—that seems to me the great point."

"You mustn't think—" began the Doctor.

"I must plead guilty"—Miss Marty poured out a glassful—"if its name suggests a foreign origin. You men, I know, profess a preference for foreign wines; and so, humorously, I hit on the name of Fra Angelico, from the herb angelica, which is its main ingredient. In reality, as I can attest, it is English to the core."

The Doctor lifted his glass and set it down again.

"You will join me?" he asked, pointing to the decanter and temporising.

"Pardon me. I indulge but occasionally: when I have a cold."

"And the Major?"

"He pleads habit. He says he is wedded to the vintages of France and Spain. 'What?' I rally him, 'when those two nations are at war with us?

And you call yourself a patriot ? ' He permits these railleries."

" He is a man in a thousand ! "

" There is no man like him ! "

" If we exclude a certain resemblance—"

" You refer to the Prince Regent ? But I was thinking only of *moral* grandeur."

" True. All else, if one may say so without disloyalty, is but skin-deep."

" Superficial."

" Thank you, the expression is preferable, and I ask your leave to substitute it."

" Solomon, my kinsman, is the noblest of men."

" And you, Miss Marty, the best of women ! " cried the Doctor, taking fire and a sip of the Fra Angelico together, and gulping the latter down heroically. " I drink to you ; nay, if I dared, I would go even further—"

" No, no, I beg of you ! " Her eyes, downcast before this sudden assault, let fall two happy tears, but a feeble gesture of the hand besought his mercy. " Let us talk of *him*," she went on breathlessly. " His elevation of character—"

" If he were to marry, now ? " the Doctor suggested. " Have you thought of that ? "

" Sometimes," she admitted, with a flutter of the breath, which sounded almost like a sigh.

" It would serve to perpetuate—"

" But where to find one worthy of him ? She must be capable of rising to his level ; nay, of continuing there."

" You are sure that is necessary ? Now, in my

experience," the Doctor inclined his head to one side and rubbed his chin softly between thumb and forefinger—a favourite trick of his when diagnosing a case—" in my observation, rather, some disparity of temper, taste, character, may almost be postulated of a completely happy alliance ; as in chemistry you bring together an acid and an alkali, and, always provided they don't explode—"

" *He* would never be satisfied with that. Believe me, the woman he condescends upon must, in return for that happy privilege, surrender her whole fate into his hands. Beneath his deference to our sex he carries an imperious will, and would demand no less."

" There *is* a little bit of that about him, now you mention it," assented the Doctor.

" But let us not cheat—" Miss Marty checked herself suddenly. " Let us not vex ourselves with any such apprehensions. He will never marry, I am convinced. I cannot imagine him in the light of a parent—with offspring, for instance. Rather, when I see him in his regimentals, or, again, in his mayoral robe and chain—you have noticed how they become him ?—"

The Doctor admitted, with a faint sigh, that he had.

" Well, then, he puts me in mind of that—what d'you call it, which the poets tell us is reproduced but once in several hundred years ? "

" The blossoming aloe ? " suggested the Doctor.

Miss Marty shook her head. " It's not a plant—it's a kind of bird. It begins with ' P,h,'—and you think of Dublin."

"Let me see—Phelim? No, I have it! Phœnix."

"That's it—Phœnix. And when it's going to die it lights a fire and sits down upon it and another springs up from the ashes."

"But I don't see how that applies to the Major."

"No-o?" queried Miss Marty, dubiously. "Well not in every particular; but the point is, there's only one at a time."

"The same might be said," urged the Doctor, delicately, "of other individual members of the Town Council; with qualifications, of course."

"And somehow I feel—I can't help a foreboding—that if ever we lose him it will be in some such way."

"Miss Marty!" The Doctor stood up, with horror-stricken face.

"There, now! You may call me fanciful, but I can't help it. And you've spilled the Fra Angelico! Let me pour you out another glassful."

"We must all die," answered the Doctor inconsequently, not yet master of himself.

"Except a few Bible characters," said Miss Marty, filling his glass. "But what the town would do without *him* I can't think. In a sense he *is* the town."

A moment before the Doctor had all but denied it; but now, overcome by the thought of a world without the Major, he hid his face. For a moment, if but in thought, he had been disloyal to his friend, his hero!

. . . . . .

Miss Marty said afterwards that, although not accustomed to prophesy and humbly aware that it was out of her line, she must have spoken under

inspiration. She was wont also, when she recalled her forebodings and the events that followed and so signally fulfilled them, to regret that when the Guernsey merchant took his leave, an hour later, she omitted to take note of his boots ; it being an article of faith with her that, in his traffic with mortals, the Prince of Darkness could not help betraying himself by his cloven hoof.

In the garden meanwhile the Major and his guest were making very good weather of it, as we say in Troy ; the one with his Madeira, the other with the brown sherry. I leave the reader to discern the gist of their talk from its technicalities.

" Three gross of ankers, you say ? " queried the Major.

" At four gallons the anker, and six francs the gallon."

" It is a large venture."

" And, for that reason, dirt cheap. To my knowledge there is not a firm in Guernsey at this moment doing trade at less than seven francs the gallon in parcels under five hundred gallons."

" Yes, yes." The Major lit his pipe and puffed meditatively. " I am not denying that. Only, you see, on our side these large operations rather heighten the expense than diminish it, while they heighten the risk enormously."

" I do not see." M. Dupin crossed his legs and awaited an explanation.

" It is simple. So many more tubs, so many more carriers ; so many more carriers, so much the more risk of including an informer. One hundred carriers,

say, I can lay hands on, knowing them all for tried men. Beyond that number I rely on recommendations, often carelessly given. The risk is more than trebled. And then, the fact of my being Mayor—"

"I should have thought it lessened the risk."

"In a way, yes. But in case of miscarriage, the consequences must be more severe. I will own that you tempt me. The tubs, you say, would be ready slung."

"Ready slung for carriage, man or horse, whichever you prefer, with ropes, stones and six anchors for sinking in case of emergency. We will allow for these if they are returned."

"To tell the truth, since becoming chief magistrate of this borough, I have rather set my face against these operations. It has seemed to me more consonant. . . . And an operation on the scale you propose could not be conducted without some degree of—er—audacity."

"It means a forced run," assented M. Dupin.

"If, on reflection—" the Major hesitated.

"Excuse me, but there is no time. For reasons of our own, my firm must clear the stuff before the end of April; that is why we offer it at the price. Three gross, with six ankers of the colouring stuff *gratis*—and the tubs ready slung. It must be 'yes' or 'no'; if you decline, then I have another customer on the string."

"The end of April, you say?" The Major refilled his glass and mused, holding it up against the last gleam of daylight.

"We could ship it on the 27th or 28th. The moon

serves then. Say that you run it on the night of the 30th ? "

" Of the 30th ? " echoed the Major. " But on that night, of all others, my hands are full. To begin with, we are half-expecting the Millennium."

" The Millennium, *hein ?* " echoed M. Dupin in his turn. " I do not know her."

" It's not a boat," the Major explained. " It's a —well, in fact, we are not altogether sure what it may turn out to be. But, setting this aside, I am engaged to conduct a military operation on the night of the 30th."

" *Hein ?* " M. Dupin eyed his host with interest. " A counter-stroke to the First Consul — is that so ? "

" Well, not exactly a downright counter-stroke ; although, if I had my way . . . but in fact (and I mention it in confidence, of course) our Artillery here is planning a surprise upon our neighbours of Looe, the descent to be made upon Talland Cove."

M. Dupin set down his glass. " But I am in luck to-night ! " said he. " You — I — we are all in luck ! "

" Forgive me, I do not see—"

" Oh, decidedly, I am in very great luck ! If only your neighbours of Looe—they, too, have a corps of Artillery, I suppose ? " M. Dupin felt in his breast pocket and drew out a paper. " Quick ! their officer's name ? "

" A Captain Pond commands them : Captain Æneas Pond."

" Pond ? Pond ? See now, and I have an intro-

duction to him! And you have arranged to surprise him on the night of April 30th—and at Talland Cove—when there will be no moon! Oh, damgood!"

"But even yet I do not see," the Major protested.

"Not quite. For the moment you do not see, quite; but in a little while." M. Dupin leaned forward and tapped the Major's knee. "Your Artillery? You can count on them?"

"To the death."

"How many?"

"Nine score, without reckoning uniforms or stretcher-bearers."

"Stretcher-bearers?"

"For the wounded. And, of course—during the operation you propose—we expect our corps to be depleted."

"By the crews? But they will be *there!* It is of the essence of your surprise that they, too, will return from Guernsey and join you in time. Next, of the Looe Artillery, how many?"

"You may put them down at seventy, all told."

"One hundred and eighty, and seventy—that makes two hundred and fifty; and the cognac at six francs a gallon; and this Captain Pond commended to me for the deepest man in Looe! It is you—it is he—it is I—it is all of us together that are in luck's way!" M. Dupin leapt up, snapped his bony fingers triumphantly; then, thrusting his hands beneath his coat-tail and clasping them, strode to and fro in front of the Major, for all the world like a long-legged chanticleer.

Ah, but wait a moment! Vainglorious bird of

Gaul, or of the island contiguous, wait a moment ere you crow before the Mayor of Troy !

For a moment the Major lay back in his chair, to all appearance stupefied, confounded. Then he too rose, his lips working, his hand shaking for one instant only as with his pipe-stem he traced a magnificent curve upon the evening sky.

" Sit down ! " he commanded. " Your plan is clever enough ; but I have another worth ten of it."

And, laying down his pipe, this extraordinary man lifted the decanter and refilled his glass to the brim without spilling a drop.

What was the Major's plan ? Wait again, and you shall see it evolved in operation.

CHAPTER VI

MALBROUCK S'EN VA

"THERE is mischief of some sort brewing," said Mr Smellie, the Riding Officer.

"You think so ?" queried Mr Pennefather, trimming a quill.

"I'd stake my last shilling on it," said Mr Smellie, slapping his right boot with his riding-whip. "You, a family man, now—"

"Eleven."

"Quite so. Then you must know how it is with children ; when they look at you as though there was no such thing as original sin, it's time to keep your eye lifting. Ten to one they're getting round you with some new devilry. Well, that's the way with your Cornish."

. . . . . .

Mr Smellie came from Glasgow—he and his colleague, Mr Lomax, the Riding Officer of the Mevagissey district which lay next to ours. The Government, it was understood, had chosen and sent them down to us on the strength of their sense of humour —so different from any to be found in the Duchy.

It certainly was different. To Mr Smellie, we of Troy had been at first but as children at play by the

sea ; in earnest over games so infantile as to excite his wondering disdain. He wondered yet ; but insensibly—as might happen to a man astray in fairy-land—his disdain had taken a tinge of fear. Behind "the children sporting on the shore," his ear had begun to catch the voice of unknown waters rolling. They came, so to speak, along the sands, these children ; innocent seeming, hilariously intent on their make-believe ; and then, on a sudden, not once but a dozen times, he had found himself tricked, duped, tripped up and cast on his back ; to rise unhurt, indeed, but clutching at impalpable air while the empty beach rang with teasing laughter.

It baffled him the more because, of his own sort, he had a strong sense of humour. It was told of Mr Pennefather, for instance, that during his clerkship at Penzance the Custom House there had been openly defied by John Carter, the famous smuggler of Prussia Cove ; that once, when Carter was absent on an expedition, the Excise officers had plucked up heart, ransacked the Cove, carried off a cargo of illicit goods and locked it up in the Custom House ; that John Carter on his return, furious at the news of his loss, had marched over to Penzance under cover of darkness, broken in the Custom House and carried off his goods again ; and that Mr Pennefather next morning, examining the rifled stores, had declared the nocturnal visitor to be John Carter beyond a doubt, because Carter was an honest man and wouldn't take anything that didn't belong to him. The Riding Officer thought this a highly amusing story, and would often twit Mr Pennefather with it.

But Mr Pennefather could never see the joke, and would plead,—

"Well, but he *was* an honest man, wasn't he?"

. . . . . .

"That's the way with you Cornish," repeated Mr Smellie; "and after a time one learns to feel it in the air, so to speak."

The little Collector looked up from his ledger, pushing his spectacles high on his brow, and glanced vaguely around the office.

"Now, for my part, I detect nothing unusual," said he.

"Furthermore," the Riding Officer went on, still tapping his boot, "I met a suspicious-looking fellow yesterday on the Falmouth Road; a deucedly suspicious-looking fellow; a fellow that answered me with a strong French accent when I spoke to him, as I made it my business to do. He had Guernsey merchant written all over him."

"Tattooed?" asked Mr Pennefather, without looking up from the ledger in which he had buried himself anew. "I had no idea they went to such lengths . . . in Guernsey . . . and fourteen is twenty-seven, and five is thirty-two, and thirty-two is two-and-eight. . . . I beg your pardon? You identified him, then?"

Mr Smellie frowned. "I shall send up a private note to the Barracks; and meanwhile, I advise you to keep an eye lifting."

"And ten is three-and-six. . . . An eye lifting, certainly," assented Mr Pennefather, without, however, immediately acting on this advice.

"There's that fellow Hymen, now, next door. He's not altogether the ass he looks, or my name's not Smellie."

"But it is, surely?" Mr Pennefather looked up in innocent surprise. "And you really think it justifies calling in the Dragoons?"

"On the face of it, no; I've no evidence. And yet, I repeat, there's some mischief afoot. This new game of Hymen's, for instance—Before coming down to these parts"—Mr Smellie threw a fine condescension into this phrase—"I should have thought it impossible that anyone in the shape of a man, let alone of a Major of Artillery, could solemnly propose to test a neighbouring corps by a night attack, and then as solemnly give warning on what night he meant to deliver it."

Mr Pennefather took off his spectacles and polished them with his silk handkerchief. "But without that precaution he would find nobody to attack."

"I tell you, it's absurd! And yet," the Riding Officer went on irritably, "if one could count on its being absurd, I wouldn't mind. But there's just a chance that, with all this foolery, Hymen and Pond are covering up a little game. Why have they chosen Talland Cove, now?"

"I suppose because, for a night attack on Looe, there's no better spot."

"Nor for running a cargo. I tell you, I shall keep the Dragoons on the alert."

"You don't suggest that you suspect—"

"Suspect? I suspect everybody. It's the rule

of the service ; and by following it I've reached the position I hold to-day."

" True." The Collector readjusted his spectacles and returned to his figures. There may have been just a hint of condolence in his assent, for the Riding Officer looked up sharply.

" If you lived in the north, Pennefather, do you know what we should say about you ? We should say that you were no very gleg in the uptake."

" I once," answered the Collector, gently, without lifting his head from the ledger, " began to read Burns, but had to give him up on account of the dialect."

. . . . . .

Meanwhile, all unaware of these dark suspicions, the Major and his Gallants were perfecting their preparations for the great surprise.

And what preparations ! In the heat of them we had almost forgotten the Millennium itself !

For weeks the band had been practising a selection of tunes appropriate (1) to invasions in general and (2) to this particular invasion. There was " Britons, Strike Home ! " for instance, and " The Padstow Hobby-horse," and " The Rout it is out for the Blues," slightly amended for the occasion :—

" As I was a-walking on Downderry sands,
Some dainty fine sport for to view,
The maidens were wailing and wringing their hands—
Oh, the Rout it is out for the Looes,
For the Looes,
Oh, the Rout it is out for the Looes."

The very urchins whistled and sang it about the

streets. On the other hand, the Major's chivalrous proposal to hymn *The George of Looe* came to nothing, since Captain Pond could supply him with neither the words nor the air.

"Notwithstanding all my researches," he wrote, "the utmost I can discover is the following stanza which Gunner Israel Spettigew—vulgarly termed Uncle Issy—one of my halest veterans, remembers to have heard sung in his youth :—

"'Oh, the *George of Looe* sank Number One;
She then sank Number Two;
She finished up with Number Three;
And hooray for the *George of Looe!*'"

"Dammy!" said the Major, "and I dare say that passes for invention over at Looe."

We in Troy were no paupers of invention, at any rate. Take, for example, the Major's plan of campaign. First of all you must figure to yourself a *terrain* shaped like a triangle—almost an equilateral triangle—with its base resting on the sea. At the western extremity of this base stands Troy; at the eastern, Looe, with Talland Cove a little to this side of it. For western side of the triangle we have the Troy River; and for apex the peaceful village of Lerryn, set in apple-orchards, where the tidal waters end by a narrow bridge. For the eastern side we take, not the Looe River (which doesn't count), but an ancient earthwork, known as the Devil's Hedge, which stretches across country from Looe up to Lerryn. Who built this earthwork, or when he did it, or for what purpose, no one can tell; but the Looe folk will quote you the following distich,—

"One day the Devil, having nothing to do,
Built a great hedge from Lerryn to Looe."

(Invention again !)

Of these things, then (as Herodotus puts it), let so much be said. But thus we get our triangle : the sea coast (base), the Troy River and the Devil's Hedge (sides), meeting at the village of Lerryn (apex) among the orchards.

Now these orchards, you must know, on May mornings when the tide served, were the favourite rendezvous for the lads and maidens of Troy, and even for the middle-aged and married ; who would company thither by water, to wash their faces in the dew, and eat cream, and see the sun rise, and afterwards return chorussing, their boats draped with green boughs.

This year the tide, indeed, served for Lerryn : but this year the maidens of Troy, if they would fare thither to pay their vows, must fare alone. Their swains would be bent upon a sterner errand.

So their Commander by secret orders had dictated, and all the town knew of it ; also that the landing was to be effected in Talland Cove, and that, if success waited on their arms, supper would be provided at the Sloop Inn, Looe. One hundred and fifty fighting men would go to the assault, in fourteen row-boats, with muffled oars. This number included the band. The residue of thirty men, making up the full strength of the corps, had disappeared from Troy some ten days before, on an errand which will appear hereafter.

But the fair were inconsolable. Almost, for some

forty-eight hours—that is to say, after the news leaked out—our Major was the most unpopular man in Troy with them who had ever been his warmest supporters. War was war, no doubt ; and women must mourn at home while men imbrued themselves in the gallant strife. But May-day, too, was May-day ; and the tides served ; and, further, there was this talk about a Millennium, and whatever the Millennium might be (and nobody but the Mayor and the Vicar, unless it was Dr Hansombody, seemed to know), it was certainly not an occasion on which women ought to be left without their natural protectors. Even the Ambulance Corps was bound for Looe, in eight additional boats. There would be scarce a row-boat left in the harbour, or the ladies might have pulled up to Lerryn on their own account.

The Major suspected these murmurings, yet he kept an unruffled brow : yes, even though harassed with vexations which these ladies could not guess—the possible defection of Hansombody, for instance.

It was not Hansombody's fault : but Sir Felix Felix-Williams, who owned the estate as well as the village of Lerryn, had reason to expect an addition to his family. Dr Hansombody could not guarantee that he might not be summoned to Pentethy, Sir Felix's mansion, at any moment.

Now, for excellent reasons—which, again, will appear—the Major could not afford to make Sir Felix an enemy at this moment. Besides, these domestic events were the little apothecary's bread and butter.

On the other hand, the absence of a professional

man must seriously discredit the *role* assigned to the Ambulance Corps in any engagement, however bloodless.

"You might," the Major suggested, "nominate half a dozen as deputy or assistant surgeons. You could easily pick out those who have shown most intelligence at your lectures."

"True," agreed the Doctor; "but as yet we have not, in my lectures, advanced so far as flesh-wounds. They would know what to do, I hope, if confronted with frost-bite, snake-bite, sunstroke or incipient croup—from all of which our little expedition will be (under Providence) immune, and I have as yet confined myself to directing them, in all cases which apparently differ from these, to run to the nearest medical man."

"Well, well!" sighed the Major. "Then, if the worst come to the worst and you cannot accompany us, we must rely on the good offices of the enemy. They have no qualified surgeon, I believe: but the second lieutenant, young Couch of Polperro, is almost out of his articles and ready to proceed to Guy's. A clever fellow, too, they tell me."

"You understand that if I fail you, it will be through no want of zeal?"

"My friend"—the Major turned on him with a smile at once magnanimous and tender—"I believe you ask nothing better than to accompany me."

"To the death!" said the Doctor, in a low voice and fervently. Then, after a pause full of emotion, "Your dispositions are all taken?"

"All, I believe. Chinn has drawn up a new will

for me, which I have signed, and it lies at this moment in my deed-box. I took the liberty to appoint you an executor."

"You would not ask me to survive you!" (O Friendship! O exemplars of a sterner age! O Rome! O Cato!) "Not to mention," went on the Doctor, "that I must be by five or six years your senior, and in the ordinary course of events—"

Major Hymen dismissed the ordinary course of events with a wave of the hand.

"I ask it as a personal favour."

"It is an honour then, and I accede."

"For the rest, I am keeping that fellow Smellie on the *qui vive*. For three days past he has been promenading the cliffs with his spy-glass. I would not lightly depreciate any man, but Smellie has one serious fault—he is ambitious."

"Such men are to be found in every walk of life."

"I fear so. Ambition is like to be Smellie's bane. He is jealous of sharing any credit with the Preventive crews, and is keeping them without information. On the other hand he delights in ordering about a military force; which, in a civilian, is preposterous."

"Quite preposterous."

"The Dragoons, of course, hate working under his orders: but I shall be surprised if he resist the temptation to call them in and dress himself in a little brief authority. Further, I have word from Polperro that he is getting together a company of the Sea Fencibles. In short, he is playing into our hands."

"But the boats?"

" They are here."

" Here ? " The Doctor's eyes grew round with wonder.

The Major swept a hand towards the horizon.

" For two days we have been enjoying a steady southerly breeze. They are yonder, you may be sure—the three of them : and that is where Smellie makes a mistake in not employing the cutter."

" And the long boats ? "

" The long boats are lying, as they have lain for three weeks past, in Runnells' yard, awaiting repairs. Runnells is a dilatory fellow and has gone no farther than to fill them with water up to the thwarts, to test their stanchness." Here the Major allowed himself to smile. " But Runnells, though dilatory, will launch them after dusk, while the tide suits."

" The tide makes until five o'clock."

" Until five-twenty, to be correct. Before seven o'clock they will be launched."

" You play a bold game, dear friend. Suppose, now, that Smellie *had* kept the cutter cruising off the coast ? "

The Major smiled again, this time with *finesse*. " The man is ambitious, I tell you. By employing the cutter he might indeed have intercepted the cargo. But he flies at higher game." Here the Major lightly tapped his chest to indicate the quarry. " In generalship, my dear doctor, to achieve anything like the highest success, you must fight with two heads—your own and your adversary's. By putting myself in Smellie's place ; by descending (if I may so say) into the depths of his

animal intelligence, by interpreting his hopes, his ambitions . . . well, in short, I believe we have weathered the risk. The Mevagissey fleet puts out to the grounds to-night, to anchor and drop nets as usual. With them our friends from Guernsey—shall we say ?—will mingle as soon as night is fallen, hang out *their* riding-lights, lower *their* nets, and generally behave in a fashion indistinguishable from that of other harvesters of the sea, until the hour when, with lightened hulls and, I trust, in full regimentals (for they carry their uniforms on board) they join us for the Grand Assault."

"But—excuse me—how much does the town know of this programme ? "

The Major shrugged his shoulders. "As little as I could manage. I have incurred some brief unpopularity, no doubt, among the fairer portion of our community, who deem that I am denying them their annual May-day jaunt. But never fear. I will explain all to-night, before embarkation."

"They may murmur," answered Dr Hansombody, "but in their hearts they trust you."

The Major's eyes filled with tears.

"The path of duty is strewn with more than roses at times. I thank you for that assurance, my friend."

They grasped hands in silence.

. . . . . .

Troy remembered later—it had reason to remember—through what halcyon weather April passed, that year, into May. For three days a gentle breeze had blown from the south ; for three more days it con-

tinued, dying down at nightfall and waking again at dawn. Stolen days they seemed : cloudless, gradual, golden ; a theft of Spring from Harvest-tide. Unnatural weather, many called it : for the air held the warmth of full summer before the first swallow appeared, and while as yet the cuckoo, across the harbour, had been heard by few.

The after-glow of sunset had lingered, but had faded at length, taking the new moon with it, leaving a night so pale, so clear, so visibly domed overhead, that almost the eye might trace its curve and assign to each separate star its degree of magnitude. Beyond the harbour's mouth the riding-lights of the Mevagissey fishing fleet ran like a carcanet of faint jewels, marking the unseen horizon of the Channel. The full spring tide, soundless or scarcely lapping along shore, fell back on its ebb, not rapidly as yet, but imperceptibly gathering speed. Below the Town Quay in the dark shadow lay the boats—themselves a shadowy crowd, ghostly, with a glimmer of white paint here and there on gunwales, thwarts, sternsheets. Their thole-pins had been wrapped with oakum and their crews sat whispering, ready, with muffled oars. On the Quay, lantern in hand, the Major moved up and down between his silent ranks, watched by a shadowy crowd.

In that crowd, as I am credibly informed, were gathered—but none could distinguish them—gentle and simple, maiden ladies with their servants or housekeepers, side by side with longshoremen, hovellers, giglet maids, and urchins ; all alike magnetised and drawn thither by the Man and the

Hour. But the Major recognised none of them. His dispositions had been made and perfected a full week before ; how thoroughly they had been perfected might be read in the mute alacrity with which man after man, squad after squad, without spoken command yet in unbroken order, dissolved out of the ranks and passed down to the boats. You could not see that Gunner Tippet, being an asthmatical man, wore a comforter and a respirating shield ; nor that Sergeant Sullivan, as notoriously susceptible to the night air, carried a case-bottle and a small basket of boiled sausages. Yet these and a hundred other separate and characteristic necessities had been foreseen and provided for.

Van, mainguard, rearguard, band, ambulance, forlorn hope, all were embarked at length. Lieutenant Chinn saluted, reported the entire flotilla ready, saluted again, and descended the steps with the Doctor (Sir Felix had sent no word, after all). Only the Major remained on the Quay's edge. Overhead rode the stars ; around him in the penumbra of the lantern's rays the crowd pressed forward timidly. He turned.

" Fellow-citizens," he said, and his voice trembled on the words, but in an instant was steady again, " you surmise, no doubt, the purpose of this expedition. An invader menaces these shores, the defence of which has been committed to us. Of the ultimate invincibility of that defence I have no doubt whatever ; nevertheless, it may expose here and there a vulnerable point. It is to test the alertness of our neighbours of Looe that we abstract ourselves

for a few hours from the comforts of home, the society of the fair, in some instances the embraces of our loved ones, and embark upon an element which, to-night propitious, might in other moods have engulfed, if it did not actually force us to postpone, our temerity—" (Here a voice said " Well done, Major ; give 'em Troy ! ")

" Methinks," continued the Major, elevating his lantern and turning to that part of the crowd whence the interruption had proceeded, " methinks I hear some fair one sigh,' But why to-night ? Why on the eve of May-day, when we are wont to seek one or other of those rural spots, vales, hamlets, remote among our river's lovelier reaches, where annually the tides have mirrored at sunrise our gala companies and the green woods responded to our innocent mirth ? Why on this consecrated eve distract our hitherto faithful swains and lead their steps divergent at an angle of something like thirty degrees ? ' I have reason to believe that some such tender complaints have made themselves audible, and it is painful to me to suffer the imputation of lack of feeling, even from an Æolian harp. Yet I have suffered it, awaiting the moment to reassure you.

" Yes, ladies, be reassured ! We depart indeed for Looe ; but we hope, ere dawn, to meet you at Lerryn and be rewarded with your approving smiles. At nine-thirty precisely the three long boats, *Naiad*, *Nautilus*, and *Corona*, which have lain for some weeks under repair in Mr Runnells' yard, will pass this Quay and proceed seaward, each manned by an able, if veteran, crew. After a brief trip outside the

harbour—to test their stanchness—they will return to the Quay to embark passengers, and start at 2 a.m. on the excursion up the river to our rendezvous at Lerryn. Nay ! " the Major turned at the head of the steps and lifted a hand—" I will accept of you no thanks but this, that during the few arduous hours ahead of us we carry your wishes, ladies, as a prosperous breeze behind our banners ! "

" Now isn't he a perfect duck ? " demanded Miss Sally Tregentil, turning in the darkness and addressing Miss Pescod, whose strongly-marked and aquiline features she had recognised in the last far-flung ray of the Major's lantern.

" My good Sarah ! *You* here ? " answered Miss Pescod, divided between surprise, disapproval and embarrassment.

" At such a period—a crisis, one might almost say—when the fate of Europe . . . and after all, if it comes to that, so are you."

" For my part—" began Miss Pescod, and ended with a sigh.

" For my part," declared Miss Sally, hardily, " I shall go to Lerryn."

" Sally ! "

" It used to be great fun. In later years mamma disapproved, but there is (may I confess it ?) this to be said for war, that beneath its awful frown—under cover of what I may venture to call the shaking of its gory locks—you can do a heap of things you wouldn't dream of under ordinary circumstances. Life, though more precarious, becomes distinctly less artificial. Two years ago, for instance, lulled in

a false security by the so-called Peace of Amiens, I should as soon have thought of flying through the air."

"Has it occurred to you," Miss Pescod suggested, "what might happen if the Corsican, taking advantage to-night of our dear Major's temporary absence—"

"Don't!" Miss Sally interrupted with a shiver. "Oh, decidedly I shall go to Lerryn to-night! On second thoughts it would be only proper."

On the dark waters below them, beyond the Quay, a hoarse military voice gave the command to "Give way!" One by one on the fast-dropping tide the boats, keeping good order, headed for the harbour's mouth. The Major led. *O navis, referent.* . . .

Think, I pray you, of Wolfe dropping down the dark St Lawrence; of Wolfe and, ahead of him, the Heights of Abraham!

CHAPTER VII

THE BATTLE OF TALLAND COVE

"Now entertain conjecture of a time
When creeping murmur and the poring dark
Fills the wide vessel of the universe. . . ."

THE *avant-garde* of the Looe Diehards occupied, and had been occupying for two dark hours—in a sitting posture—the ridge of rock which, on its eastern side, sheltered Talland Cove. One may say, considering the heavy dew and the nature of the ridge—of slate formation and sharply serrated—they had clung to it obstinately. Above them the clear and constellated dome of night turned almost perceptibly around its pole. At their feet the tide lapped the beach, phosphorescent, at the last draught of ebb.

Somewhere in the darkness at the head of the beach—either by the footbridge where the stream ran down, or in the meadow behind it—lay the main body. A few outposts had been flung wide to the westward, and Captain Pond for the second time had walked off to test their alertness and give and receive the password—"*Death to the Invader.*"

"And a more cold-running act of defiance I don't remember to have heard—no, not in all my years of service," said Gunner Israel Spettigew, a cheerful sexagenarian, commonly known as Uncle Issy, dis-

cussing it with his comrades on the ridge. "There's a terrible downrightness about that word 'death.' Speaking for myself, and except in the way of business, I wouldn' fling it at a cat."

"'Tis what we must all come to," said Gunner Oke, a young married man, gloomily shifting his seat.

"True, lad, true. Then why cast it up against any man in particular, be he French or English? Folks in glass houses, simmin' to me, shouldn' throw stones."

"I reckon you fellows might find something more cheerful to talk about." Gunner Oke shifted his seat again, and threw a nervous glance seaward.

"William Oke, William Oke, you'll never make a sojer! Now I mind back in 'seventy-nine when the fleets of France an' Spain assembled and come together agen us—sixty-six sail of the line, my Billies, besides frigates an' corvettes an' such-like small trade; an' the folks at Plymouth blowing off their alarm-guns, an' the signals flying from Maker Tower—a bloody flag at the masthead an' two blue uns at the outriggers. Four days they laid to, in sight of the assembled multitude of Looe, an' Squire Buller rode down to form us up to oppose 'em. 'Hullo!' says the Squire catching sight of me. 'Where's your gun? Don't begin for to tell me that a han'some, well-set-up, intelligent chap like Israel Spettigew is for hangin' back at his country's call!' 'Squire,' says I, 'you've a pictered me to a hair. But there's one thing you've left out. I've been turnin' it over, an' I don't see that I'm fit to die.'

'Why not?' says he. 'I'm not a saved man like them other chaps,' says I. 'I've had a few convictions of sin, but that's as far as it's gone.' 'Tut,' says he, 'have you ever broken the Commandments?' 'What's that?' I asks. 'Why, the things up at the end of the church, inside the rails.' 'I never married my gran'mother, if that's what you mean,' I says. 'That's the Affini-ety Table,' says he, 'but have 'ee ever made to yourself a graven image?' 'Lord, no,' I says, 'I leaves that nigglin' work to the I-talians.' 'Have 'ee honoured your father an' your mother?' 'They took damgood care about that,' says I. 'Well, then, have 'ee ever coveted your neighbour's wife?' 'No,' I says, 'I never could abide the woman.' 'Come, come,' says he, 'did 'ee ever commit murder upon a man?' 'That's a leadin' question from a magistrate,' I says; 'but I don't mind ownin', as man to man, that I never did.' 'Then,' says he, 'the sooner you pitch-to and larn the better.'"

"The blood-thirsty old termigant!"

"'Twas the way of us all in the year 'seventy-nine," the old man admitted modestly. "A few throats up or down—Lord bless 'ee!—we talked of it as calm as William Oke might talk of killin' a pig! And, after all, what's our trade here to-night but battery and murder?"

"But 'tisn' the French we'm expectin'," urged Oke, whose mind moved slowly.

"'Tis the same argyment with these billies from Troy. Troy an' Looe—what's between mun in an ordinary way? A few miles; which to a thoughtful

mind is but mud and stones, with two-three churches and a turnpike to keep us in mind of Adam's fall. Why, my own brother married a maid from there ! "

" 'Tis the Almighty's doin'," said Uncle Issy ; " He's hand-in-glove with King George, and, while that lasts, us poor subject fellows have got to hate Bonyparty with all our heart and with all our mind and with all our soul and with all our strength, for richer for poorer, till death us do part, and not to be afraid with any amazement. To my mind, that's half the fun of being a sojer ; the pay's small and the life's hard, and you keep ungodly hours ; but 'tis a consolation to sit out here 'pon a rock and know you'm a man of blood and breaking every mother's son of the Ten Commandments wi' the Lord's leave."

" What's *that !* " Gunner Oke gripped the Sergeant's arm of a sudden and leaned forward, straining his ears.

Someone was crossing the track towards them with wary footsteps, picking his way upon the light shingle by the water's edge. Presently a voice, hoarse and low, spoke up to them out of the darkness.

" Hist, there ! Silence in the ranks ! " The speaker was Captain Pond himself. " A man can hear that old fool Spettigew's cackle half-way across the Cove. They're coming, I tell you ! "

" Where, Cap'n ? Where ? "

" Bare half-a-mile t'other side of Downend Point. Is the first rocket ready ? "

" Ay, ay, Cap'n."

" And the flint and steel ? "

"Here, between my knees: and Oke beside me, ready with the fuse. Got the fuse, Oke?"

"If—if you p-please, sir—"

"What's wrong?"

"If you p-please, sir, I've chewed up the fuse by mistake!"

"*What's* he saying?"

"I got it m-mixed up, sir, here in the d-dead darkness with my quid o' baccy—and I th-think I'm goin' to be sick."

"'Tis the very right hand o' Providence, then, that I brought a spare one," spoke up Pengelly. "Here, Un' Issy—*you* take hold—"

"Everything must follow in order, mind," Captain Pond commanded. "As soon as the first boat takes ground, you challenge: then count five, and up goes the rocket. Eh?" The Captain swung round at the sound of another footstep on the shingle. "Is that you, Clogg? Man, but you made me jump!"

"Captain Pond! Oh, Captain Pond!" stammered the newcomer, who was indeed no other than Mr Clogg, senior lieutenant of the Diehards.

"Why have you left your post, sir? Don't stand there clinky-clanking your sword on the pebbles—catch it up under your arm, sir: you're making noise enough to scare the dead! Now, then, what have you to report? Nothing wrong with the main body, I hope?"

"A man might call it ghosts"—Mr Clogg in the darkness passed a sleeve across his clammy brow—"A man might call it ghosts, Captain Pond, and

another might set it down to drink. But you know my habits."

"Be quick, man! You've seen something? What is it?"

"Ah, what indeed? You may well ask it, sir: though not if you was to put the Book into my hands at this moment and ask me to kiss it—"

"Clogg," interrupted the Captain, stepping close and gripping him by the upper arm, "will you swear to me you have not been drinking?"

"Yes and no, Captain. That is, it began with my stepping up the valley to the farm for a dollop of hot water—I'd a thimbleful of schnapps in my flask here—and the night turning chilly, and me remembering that Mrs Nankivel up to the farm was keeping the kettle on the boil, because she promised as much only last night, knowing my stomach to be susceptible. Well, sir, not meaning to be away more'n a moment—as I was going up the meadow, but keeping along the withy-bed, you understand?—and if I hadn't taken that road, more by instinct than anything else—"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, if you've anything important to say, say it! In another five minutes the boats will be here!"

"I don't know what you'd call 'important,'" answered the Lieutenant, in an aggrieved tone. "As I was telling, I got to where the withy-bed ends at the foot of the orchard below the house. The orchard, as you know, runs down on one side of the stream, and t'other side there's the grass meadow they call Little Parc. Just at that moment, if you'll

believe me, I heard a man sneeze, and 'pon top of that a noise like a horse's bit shaken—a sort of jingly sound, not ten paces off, t'other side of the withies. 'Tis a curious habit of mine—and you may or may not have noticed it—but I never can hear another person sneeze without wanting to sneeze too. How-s'ever, there's a way of stopping it by putting your thumb on your top lip and pressing hard, and that's what I did, and managed to make very little noise; so that it surprised me when somebody said, 'Be quiet, you fool there!' But he must have meant it for the other man. Well, ducking down behind the withies and peeking athurt the darkness, by degrees I made out a picter that raised the very hairs on the back of my neck. Yonder, on the turf under the knap of Little Parc, what do I see but a troop of horsemen drawn up, all ghostly to behold! And yet not ghostly neither; for now and then, plain to these fleshly ears, one o' the horses would paw the ground or another jingle his curb-chain on the bit. I tell you, Captain, I crope away from that sight a good fifty yards 'pon my belly before making a break for the Cove; and when I got back close to the mainguard I ducked my head and skirted round to the track here in search of you: for I wouldn' be one to raise false alarms, not I! But, if you ask my private opinion, 'tis either Old Boney hisself or the Devil, and we'm lost to a man."

"Good Lord!" muttered Captain Pond, half to himself. "Horsemen, you say?"

"Horsemen, Captain—great horsemen as tall as statues. But statues, as I told myself, at this time

o' night! 'Tis out of the question, an' we may put it aside once for all."

"Horsemen?" repeated Captain Pond. "There's only one explanation, and Hymen must be warned. But I *do* think he might have trusted me!"

He turned for a swift glance seaward, and at the same instant one or two voices on the ridge above called alarm. Under the western cliff his eye detected a line of dark shadows stealing towards the shore.

"*Until gaining the entrance of the Cove*"—so ran the Major's order—"*the boats will preserve single file. At Dowend Point the leading boat will halt and lie on her oars, close inshore, while each successor pivots and spreads in echelon to starboard, keeping, as nearly as may be, two fathoms' distance from her consort to port; all gradually, as the shore is approached, rounding up for a simultaneous attack in line. The crews, on leaping ashore, will spread and find touch with one another in two lines, to sweep the beach. A bugle-call will announce the arrival of each boat.*"

The Major, erect in the bows of the leading boat, glanced over his right shoulder and beheld his line of followers, all in perfect order, extend themselves and close the mouth of the Cove. Ahead of him—ahead but a few yards only—he heard the slack tide run faintly on the shingle. From the dark beach came no sound. Overhead quivered the expectant stars. He lifted his sword-arm, and from point to hilt ran a swift steely glitter.

"Give way, lads! And Saint Fimbar for Troy!"

A stroke of the oars, defiant now, muffled no longer! Two—three strokes, and with a jolt the boat's nose took the beach. The shock flung the Major forward over the bows; and on all fours, with a splash—like Julius Cæsar—he saluted the soil he came to conquer. But in an instant he stood erect again, waving his blade.

"Forward! Forward, Troy!"

"I beg your pardon, Hymen," interrupted Captain Pond, quietly but seriously, stepping forth from the darkness. "Yes, yes; that's understood—but see here now—"

"Back, or you are my prisoner!" The Major had scrambled to his feet, and stood waving his sword.

"Hymen!" Captain Pond ran past the Major's guard and caught him by the elbow.

"Hands off, I say! Forward, Troy!" The Major struggled to disengage his sword-arm.

"Hymen, don't be a fool! As a friend now—though you *might* have taken me into your confidence—"

"Unhand me, Pond! Though you are doing your best to spoil the whole business—"

"Listen to me, I say. The Dragoons—"

But Captain Pond shouted in vain. Bugle after bugle drowned his voice, rending the darkness. From the rocks to the eastward voices answered them, challenging wildly.

"Death to the invader!"

With a *whoo-sh* a rocket leapt into the air and burst, flooding the beach with light, showing up

every furze bush, every stone wall, every sheep-track, on the surrounding cliffs. As if they had caught fire from it, a score of torches broke into flame on the eastward rocks, and in the sudden blaze, under the detonating fire of musketry, the men of Troy could be seen tumbling out of their boats and splashing ankle-deep to the shore.

It was a splendid, a gallant sight. Each man, as he reached *terra firma*, dropped on one knee, fired deliberately, reloaded, and advanced a dozen paces. Still from the boats behind fresh reinforcements splashed ashore and crowded into the firing-line: while from the eastward rock the vanguard of the Diehards kept up its deadly flanking fire, heedless of the torches that exposed them each and all at plain target-shot to the oncoming host.

Still, amid the pealing notes of the bugles, the Major waved his men forward. Captain Pond, breaking loose from him and facing swiftly towards the Cove-head, with a flourish of his blade called upon his mainguard.

Under the volley that thereupon swept the beach, the invaders did indeed waver for a moment—so closely it resembled the real thing. As the smoke lifted, however, by the murky glare of the torches they were seen to be less demoralised than infuriated. And now, upon the volley's echo, a drum banged thrice, and from a boat just beyond the water's edge the Troy bandsmen crashed out with,—

"The Rout it is out for the Looes,
For the Looes;
Oh, the Rout it is out for the Looes!"

"Forward! Forward, Troy!"

"Steady, the Two Looes! Steady, the Die-hards!"

"Form up—form up, there, to the left! Hurray, boys! give 'em the bagginet!"

"Death to Invader! Reload, men! Oh, for your lives, reload! Make ready, all! Prepare! Fire!"

. . . . . .

"Mr Spettigew! Mr Spettigew!"

"Eh?" Uncle Issy turned as William Oke plucked him by the sleeve. "What's the matter now? Reload, I tell 'ee!"

"I—I can't, Mr Spettigew. I've a-fired off my ramrod!"

"Then you'm a lost man."

"Will it—will it have killed any person, d'ee think?" Oke's teeth rattled like a box of dice as he peered out over the dark and agitated crowd of boats.

"Shouldn' wonder at all."

"I didn' mean to kill any person, Mr Spettigew!"

"'Tis the sort of accident, Oke, that might happen to anyone in war. At the worst they'll recommend 'ee to mercy. The mistake was your tellin' me."

"You won't inform upon me, Mr Spettigew? Don't say you'll inform upon me!"

"No, I won't; not if I can help it. But dang it! first of all you swaller the fuse, and next you fire off your ramrod."

"E-everything must have a beginning, Mr Spettigew."

Uncle Issy shook his head. "I doubt you'll never make a sojer, William Oke. You'm too frolicsome

wi' the materials. Listen, there's Pengelly shoutin' for another volley! Right you be, sergeant! Make ready—prepare—Eh? Hullo!"

. . . . . .

Why was it that suddenly, at the height of the hubbub, a panic fell upon the bandsmen of Troy? Why did the "Rout for the Looes" cease midway in a bar? What was it that hushed on an instant the shouts, the rallying cries upon the beach, the bugle-calls and challenges, the furious uproar of musketry?

Why, within twenty yards of the Cove-head, in the act of charging upon the serried ranks of Looe's main guard, did Major Hymen face about and with sword still uplifted stare behind him, and continue to stare as one petrified?

What meant that strange light, out yonder by the Cove's mouth, in the rear of his boats?

The light grew and spread until it illuminated every pebble on the beach. The men of Troy, dazzled by the glare of it, blinked in the faces of the men of Looe.

THE FRENCH!

"A trap! A trap!" yelled someone far to the right, and the cry was echoed on the instant by a sound in the rear of the Diehards—a sound yet more terrible—the pounding of hoofs upon hard turf.

Again Captain Pond rushed forward and caught the Major by the elbow.

"The Dragoons!" he whispered. "Run for your life, man!"

But already the ranks of the Diehards had begun to waver; and now, as the oncoming hoofs thun-

dered louder, close upon their rear, they broke. Trojans and men of Looe turned tail and were swept in one commingled crowd down the beach.

" To the water, there ! Down to the water, every man of you ! "

A voice loud as a bull's roared out the command from the darkness. The Major, still waving his sword, was lifted by the crowd's pressure and swept along like a chip in a tideway. His feet fought for solid earth. Glancing back as he struggled, he saw, high above his shoulder, lit up by the flares from seaward, a line of flashing swords, helmets, cuirasses.

" To the boats ! " yelled the crowd.

" To the water ! Drive 'em to the water ! " answered the stentorian voice, now recognisable as Mr Smellie's.

The Dragoons, using the flat of their sabres, drove the fugitives down to the tide's edge, nor drew rein until their chargers stood fetlock-deep in water, still pressing the huddled throng around the boats.

" Bring a lantern, there ! " shouted the Riding Officer. " And call Hymen ! Where is Hymen ? "

" I am here ! "

The Major had picked himself up out of two feet of water, into which he had been flung on all-fours. He was dripping wet, but he still clutched his naked blade and, advancing into the light of the lantern's rays, brought it up to salute with a fine cold dignity.

" I am here," he repeated quietly.

" Well, then, I'm sorry for you, Hymen ; but the game's up," said Mr Smellie.

The Major glanced at him, for a moment only.

"Will someone inform me who commands this troop?" he asked, looking first to right, then to left, along the line of the Dragoons.

"At your service, sir," answered a young officer, pressing his horse forward alongside Mr Smellie's.

The Major reached out a hand for the lantern. Someone passed it to him obediently; and holding it he scanned the officer up and down amid the dead silence of the crowd.

"Your name, sir?"

"Arbuthnot, sir—Captain Arbuthnot, of the 5th Dragoons."

"Then allow me to ask, Captain Arbuthnot, by what right have you and your troopers assaulted my men?"

"Excuse me," the Captain answered. "I am acting on trustworthy information. The Riding Officer here, Mr Smellie—"

But here Mr Smellie himself interposed brusquely.

"You can stow this bluster, Hymen. I've cornered you, and you know it. The flares in the offing yonder came from two preventive boats. Back-door and front I have you, as neat as a rat in a drain; so you may just turn that lantern of yours on the cargo, own up, and sing small."

"To resume our conversation, Captain Arbuthnot," the Major went on. "Upon what information are you and your men taking a part, uninvited, in this evening's—er—proceedings? You must understand, sir, that I put this question as a magistrate."

"To be frank, sir, I am warned that under cover of a feigned attack between your two corps an illicit

cargo was to be run here to-night. The Riding Officer's information is precise, and he tells me he is acquainted with the three boats in which the goods have been brought over."

" And more by token, there they are ! " exclaimed Mr Smellie, pointing to three small lugger-rigged craft that lay moored some six or eight fathoms outside the longboats, with mainmasts unstepped, sails left to lie loose about deck with an artful show of carelessness, and hulls suspiciously deep in the water. He dismounted, caught up a lantern, and scanned them, chuckling in his glee. " See here, captain, the rogues had their gang-planks out and ready. Now, wait till I've whistled in the preventive crews, and inside of ten minutes you shall see what game these pretty innocents were playing."

He blew his whistle, and a whistle answered from the offing, where the flares continued to blaze.

" Excuse me again," said the Major, ignoring the interruption and still addressing himself to Captain Arbuthnot, " but this is a very serious accusation, sir. If, as you surmise—or rather as your informant surmises—these boats should prove to be laden with contraband goods, the men undoubtedly deserve punishment ; and I am the less likely to deprecate it since they have compromised me by their folly. For me, holding as I do the King's commission of the peace, to be involved, however innocently, however unconsciously—"

" Ay," struck in Mr Smellie again, " it's a devilish awkward business for you, Hymen. But you won't improve it by turning cat-in-the-pan at the last

moment, and so I warn you. Come along, lads ! " he called to the preventive crews. " We have 'em right and tight this trip. See the three luggers, there, to port of ye ? "

" Ay, ay, sir ! "

" Tumble aboard, then, and fetch us out a sample of their cargo."

There was a pause. Save for the jingling of the chargers' bits and now and again the clink of scabbard on boot, silence—dead silence—held the beach. Aboard the boats the preventive men could be heard rummaging.

" Found anything ? " called out Mr Smellie.

" Ay, ay, sir ! "

" What is it ? "

" Casks ! "

" What did I promise you ? " Mr Smellie turned to Captain Arbuthnot in triumph. " Luxmore ! " he called aloud.

" Ay, ay, sir ! " came the Chief Boatman's voice in answer.

" There's a plank handy. Roll us a sample or two ashore here, and fetch along chisel and auger."

" If you think it necessary, sir—"

" Do as you're told, man ! . . . Ah, here we are ! "—as a couple of preventive men splashed ashore, trundling a cask along the plank between them, and up-ended it close by the water's edge.

Captain Arbuthnot had dismounted and, advancing with his arm through his charger's bridle, bent over the cask.

"Devilish queer-smelling brandy!" he observed, drawing back a pace and sniffing.

"It has been standing in the bilge. These fellows never clean out their boats from one year's end to another," said Mr Smellie, positively. Yet he, too, eyed the cask with momentary suspicion. In shape, in colour, it resembled the tubs in which Guernsey ordinarily exported its *eau-de-vie*. It was slung, too, ready for carriage, and with French left-handed rope, and yet. . . . It seemed unusually large for a Guernsey tub . . . and unusually light in scantling. . . .

"Shall I spile en, maister?" asked one of the preventive men, producing a large auger.

"No, stave its head in. And fetch a pannikin, somebody. There's good water at the beach-head; and I daresay your men, Captain, won't despise a tot of French liquor after their ride."

The preventive man set his chisel against the inner rim of the cask, and dealt it a short sharp blow with his hammer, a sort of trial tap, to guide his aim. "French liquor?" He sniffed. "Furrin fruit, more like. Phew! Keep back there, and stand by for lavender!"

Crash! . . .

"Pf—f!"

"Ar-r-r-ugh! Oh, merciful Heaven!" Captain Arbuthnot staggered back, clapping thumb and forefinger to his nose.

"PILCHARDS!"

"SALT PILCHARDS!"

"ROTTEN PILCHARDS!"

Mr Smellie opened his mouth, but collapsed in a fit of retching, as from right and left, and from the darkness all around him, a roar of Homeric laughter woke the echoes of the Cove. Men rolled about laughing. Men leaned against one another to laugh.

Already the preventive men on board the luggers —having been rash enough to prise open some half-a-dozen casks—had dropped overboard and were wading ashore, coughing and spitting as they came. Amid the uproar Major Hymen kept a perfectly grave face.

"You see, sir," he explained to Captain Arbuthnot, "Mr Smellie is fond of hunting where there is no fox. So some of my youngsters hit on the idea of providing him with a drag. They have spent a week at least in painting these casks to look like the real thing. . . . I am sorry, sir, that you and your gallant fellows should have been misled by an officious civilian; but if I might suggest your marching on to Looe, where a good supper awaits us, to take this taste out of our mouths—and good liquor too, not contraband, to drown resentment—"

The Captain may surely be pardoned if for the moment even this gentle speech failed to placate him. He turned in dudgeon amid the grinning crowd and was in the act of remounting, but missed the stirrup as his charger reared and backed before the noise of yet another diversion. No one knows who dipped into the cask and flung the first handful over unhappy Mr Smellie. No one knows who led the charge down upon the boats, or gave the cry to stave in the barrels on board. But in a trice

the preventive men were driven overboard and, as they leapt into the shallow water, were caught and held and drenched in the noisome mess ; while the Riding Officer, plastered ere he could gain his saddle, ducked his head and galloped up the beach under a torrential shower of deliquescent pilchards.

The Dragoons did not interfere.

"Shall it be for Looe, Captain ?" challenged Major Hymen, waving his blade and calling on the Gallants to re-form. And as he challenged, by the happiest of inspirations the band, catching up their instruments, crashed out with,—

"Oh, the De'il's awa'—
The De'il's awa'—
The De'il's awa' wi' th' exciseman!"

CHAPTER VIII

"COME, MY CORINNA, COME!"

MISS MARTY drew aside her window curtain to watch the rising moon. She could not sleep. Knowing that she would not be able to sleep, she had not undressed.

She gazed out upon the street, dark now and deserted. No light signalled to her from the attic window behind which Dr Hansombody so often sat late over his books and butterfly cases. He had gone with the others.

She listened. The house was silent save for the muffled snoring of Scipio in his cupboard-bedroom under the stairs. She raised the window-sash gently, leaned out upon the soft spring night, and listened again.

Far down the street, from the purlieus of the Town Quay, her ear caught a murmur of voices—of voices and happy subdued laughter. The maidens of Troy were embarking; and to-morrow would be May morning.

Miss Marty sighed. How long was it since she had observed May morning and its rites? The morrow, too, if the Vicar and the Major were right in their calculations, would usher in the Millennium. But again, what was the Millennium to her? Could it bring back her youth?

She heard the boats draw near and go by. The houses to the left hid them from her : but she leaned out, hearkening to the soft plash of oars, the creak of thole-pins, the girls' voices in hushed chorus practising the simple native harmonies they would lift aloud as they returned after sun-rise. She recognised the tune, too ; the old tune of " The Padstow Hobby-horse,"—

" Unite and unite, and let us all unite,
For summer is a-come in to-day—
And whither we are going we will all go in white
In the merry merry morning of May.

" Rise up, Master ——, and joy you betide,
For summer is a-come in to-day—
And blithe is the bride lays her down by your side
In the merry merry morning of May."

Hushed though the voices were, each word fell distinct on her ear as the boats drew near and passed up the tideway.

" Rise up, Mistress ——, all in your smock of silk,
For summer is a-come in to-day—
And all your body under as white as any milk
In the merry merry morning of May."

The voices faded away up the river. Only the lilt of the song came back to her now, but memory supplied the words. Had they not been sung under her window years ago ?

" Rise up, Mistress Marty, all out of your bed,
For summer is a-come in to-day—
Your chamber shall be spread with the white rose and red
In the merry merry morning of May.

"O where be the maidens that here now should sing?
For summer is a-come in to-day—
They be all in the meadows the flowers gathering,
In the merry merry morning of May."

What magic was there in this artless ditty that kept Miss Marty lingering awhile with moist eyes ere she closed the window sash?

"Wh'st! Miss Mar-ty!"

Heavens! Whose voice was that, calling up hoarsely from the shadows? She peered out, but could see nobody. Suddenly her maiden modesty took alarm. What possessed her to be standing here exposed, and exposing the interior of her lighted bedchamber to view from the street? She ran back in a flurry and blew out the candles; then, returning, put up a hand to draw down the window-sash.

"Wh'st! Miss Mar-ty!"

"Gracious goodness!" After a moment's hesitation she craned out timorously, "Cai Tamblyn . . . ?"

"Miss Marty!"

"What on earth are you doing there at this time of night?"

"Sentry-go."

"Nonsense. What do I want of a sentry?"

"You never can tell."

"Are you here by the Major's order?"

"Ch't!" answered Cai Tamblyn. "*Him!*"

"Then go away, please, and let me beg you to speak more respectfully of your master."

"I reckon," said Cai, slowly, "you don't know that, barrin' the nigger under the stairs, this here

town's as empty as my hat. Well, a man can but die once, and if the French come, let 'em ; that's all I say. Good-night, miss."

"The town empty ? "

"Males, females and otherwise, down to Miss Jex at the post-office." (Cai Tamblyn nursed an inveterate antipathy for the post-mistress. He alleged no reason for it, save that she wore moustaches, which was no reason at all, and a monstrous exaggeration.) "There's Miss Pescod gone, and Miss Tregentil with her maid."

"But where ? Why ? "

"Up the river. Gallivantin'. That's what I spoke ye for, just now. Mind you, I don't propose no gallivantin' ; but there's safety in numbers, and if you've a mind for it, I've the boat ready by the Broad Slip."

"But what foolishness ! "

"Ay," Mr Tamblyn assented. "That's what I said to the Doctor when he first mentioned it. 'What foolishness,' I said, 'at *her* time o' life ! ' But then we never reckoned on the whole town goin' crazed."

"The Doctor ? " queried Miss Marty, with a glance down the dark street. "He thinks of everything," she murmured.

There was a pause, during which Mr Tamblyn somewhat ostentatiously tested the lock of his musket.

"You are not going to frighten me, Cai."

"No, miss."

"I—I think an expedition up the river would be

very pleasant. If, as you say, Miss Pescod has gone—"

"Yes, miss."

"I must bring Scipio."

"Very well, miss. If the French come, they *might* think o' looking under the stairs."

. . . . . .

Twenty minutes later Miss Marty—escorted by Scipio, who bore a lantern—tip-toed down the street to the Broad Slip, fearful even of her own light footstep on the cobbles.

The Broad Slip—it has since been filled in—was in those days a sort of dock, inset between the waterside houses and running up so close to the street that the vessels it berthed were forced to take in their bowsprits to allow the pack-horse traffic to pass. On its south side a flight of granite steps led down to the water: and at the foot of these (the tide being low) Cai Tamblyn waited with his boat.

"I declare my heart's in my mouth," Miss Marty panted, as she took her seat. Cai directed Scipio to sit amidships, pushed off in silence, and taking the forward thwart, began to pull.

"Now there's a thing," he said after a few strokes with a jerk of his head towards the dark longshore houses, "you don't often see nor hear about outside o' the Bible; a deserted city. Fine pickings for Boney if he only knew."

Miss Marty's thoughts flew back at once to a corner cupboard in the parlour, inlaid with tulips in Dutch marqueterie, and containing the Major's priceless egg-shell china. To be sure, if the French

landed, she—weak woman that she was—could not defend this treasure. But might not the Major blame her for having abandoned it ?

" I—I trust," she hazarded, " that our brave fellows have succeeded in their enterprise. It seemed to me that I heard the sound of distant firing just now."

" If they hadn't, miss, they'd ha' been back afore now. I had my own doubts about 'em, for they're a hair-triggered lot, the Troy Gallants. No fear of their goin' off ; but 'tis a matter o' doubt in what direction."

" Your master," said Miss Marty, severely, addressing Cai across Scipio (who for some reason seldom or never spoke in Cai's company)—" your master has the heart of a lion. He would die rather than acknowledge defeat."

" A heart of a lion, miss, if you'll excuse my saying it, is an uncomfortable thing in a man's stomach ; an' more especially when 'tis fed up on the wind o' vanity. I've a-read my Bible plumb down to the forbidden books thereof, and there's a story in it called Bel and the Dragon, which I mind keeping to the last, thinkin' 'twas the name of a public-house. 'Tis a terrible warnin' against swollen vittles."

" You are a dreadful cynic, Cai."

" Nothin' of the sort, miss," said Cai, stoutly. " I thinks badly o' most men—that's all."

His talk was always cross-grained, but its volume betrayed a quite unwonted geniality to-night. And half a mile further, where the dark river bent around Wiseman's Stone, he so far relaxed as to rest on his

oars and challenge the famous echo from the wooded cliffs. Somewhat to Miss Marty's astonishment it responded.

"And by night, too! I had no idea!"

"Night?" repeated Mr Tamblyn, after rowing on for another fifty strokes. He paused as if he had that moment heard, and glanced upward. "'Tis much as ever. The sky's palin' already, and we'll not reach Lerryn by sunrise. I think, miss, if you'll step ashore, this here's as good a place as any. Scipio and me'll keep the boat and turn our backs."

Miss Marty understood. The boat's nose having been brought alongside a ridge of rock, she landed in silence, climbed the foreshore, up by a hazel-choked path to a meadow above, and there, solemnly thrusting her hands into the lush grass, turned to the east and bathed her face in the dew. It is a rite which must be performed alone, in silence; and the morning sun must not surprise it.

"You've been terrible quick," remarked Cai, as she stepped down to the foreshore again in the ghostly light. "You can't have stayed to dabble your feet. Didn't think it wise, I s'pose? And I daresay you're right."

From far ahead of them as they started again, the voices of the singers came borne down the river; and again Miss Marty's memory supplied the words of the song,—

"The young men of our town, they might if they wo'ld—
For summer is a-comin' in to-day—
They might have built a ship and have gilded her with gold
In the merry merry morning of May."

"The young men . . . the young men . . . they might if they wo'ld." Ah, Miss Marty, was it only the edge of the morning that heightened the rose on your cheek by a little—a very little—as the sky paled? And now the kingfishers were awake, and the woodlands nigh, and the tide began to gather force as it neared the narrower winding channel. To enter this they skirted a mud-flat, where the day, breaking over the tree-tops and through the river mists, shone on scores upon scores of birds gathered to await it—curlews, sandpipers, gulls in rows like strings of jewels, here and there a heron standing sentry. The assembly paid no heed to the passing boat.

Miss Marty gazed up at the last star fading in the blue. How clear the morning was! How freshly scented beneath the shadow of the woods! Her gaze descended upon the incongruous top-hat and gold-laced livery of Scipio, touched with the morning sunshine. She glanced around her and motioned to Cai Tamblyn to bring the boat to shore by a grassy spit whence (as she knew) a cart-track led alongshore through the young oak coppices to the village.

"And Scipio," she said, turning as she stepped out on the turf, "will like a run in the woods."

She had walked on, maybe a hundred paces, before the absurdity of it struck her. She had been thinking of Mr Pope's line,—

"When wild in woods the noble savage ran,"

and at the notion of Scipio, in gilt-laced hat and

livery, tearing wildly through the undergrowth in the joy of liberty, she halted and laughed aloud.

She was smiling yet when, at a turning of the leafy lane, she came upon the prettiest innocent sight. On a cushion of moss beside the path, two small children—a boy and a girl—lay fast asleep. The boy's arm was flung around his sister's shoulders, and across his thighs rested a wand or thin pole topped with a May-garland of wild hyacinths, red-robin and painted birds' eggs. A tin cup, brought to collect pence for the garland, glittered in the cart-rut at their feet. It had rolled down the mossy bank as the girl's fingers relaxed in sleep.

They were two little ones of Troy, strayed hither from the merry-making ; and at first Miss Marty had a mind to wake them, seeing how near they lay to the river's brink. But noting that a fallen log safe-guarded them from this peril, she fumbled for the pocket beneath her skirt, dropped a sixpence with as little noise as might be into the tin cup, and tip-toed upon her way.

About three hundred yards from the village she met another pair of children ; and, soon after, a score or so in a cluster, who took toll of her in pence ; for almost everyone carried a garland. And then the trees opened, and she saw before her the village with its cottages, grey and whitewashed, its gardens and orchards, mirrored in the brimming tide, all trembling in the morning light and yet exquisitely still. Far up the river, beyond the village and the bridge, a level green meadow ran out, narrowing the channel ; and here beneath the apple-trees—for the meadow

was half an orchard—had been set out many lines of white-covered tables, at which the Mayers made innocently merry.

Innocently, did I say ? Well, I have known up-country folk before now to be scandalised by some things which we in the Duchy think innocent enough. So let me admit that the three longboats conveyed something more than the youth and beauty of Troy to that morning's Maying ; that when launched from Mr Runnells' yard they were not entirely what they seemed : that from their trial spin across the bay they returned some inches deeper in the water, and yet they did not leak. Had you perchance been standing by the shore in the half-light as they came up over the shallows, you might have wondered at the number of times they took ground, and at the slowness of the tide to lift and float them. You might have wondered again why, after they emerged from the deep shadow of Sir Felix Felix-Williams' woods upon the southern shore, albeit in shallow water, they seemed to feel their hindrances no longer.

Have you ever, my reader, caught hold of a lizard and been left with his tail in your hands ?

Even so easily did these three longboats shed their false keels, which half an hour later were but harmless-looking stacks of timber among Sir Felix's undergrowth. Half an hour later, had your unwary feet led you to a certain corner of Sir Felix's well-timbered demesne, you might have scratched your head and wondered what magic carpet had transported you into the heart of the Cognac District.

And all this was the work of the men of Troy (not being volunteers) who had come either in the longboats or in the many boats escorting these.

But the women of Troy, being deft with the oar one and all, took the places of the men left behind in the woods, and, singing yet, brought both the longboats and these other boats safely to Lerryn on the full flood of the tide, and disembarking upon the meadow there, gathered around the tables under the apple trees to eat bread and cream in honour of May-day, looking all the while as if butter would not melt in their mouths. Between their feasting they laughed a great deal; but either they laughed demurely, being constrained by the unwonted presence of Miss Pescod and other ladies of Troy's acknowledged *élite*, or Miss Marty as yet stood too far off to hear their voices.

. . . . . .

Let us return to Scipio, who, on receiving Miss Marty's permission to wander, had made his way up through the woods in search of the Devil's Hedge, along which, as he knew, his master would be leading back the triumphant Gallants.

Fidelity was ever the first spring of Scipio's conduct. He adored the Major with a canine devotion, and by an instinct almost canine he found his way up to the earthwork and chose a position which commanded the farthest prospect in the direction of Looe. From where he sat the broad hedge dipped to a narrow valley, climbed the steep slope opposite, and vanished, to reappear upon a second and farther ridge two miles away. As yet he could discern no

sign of the returning heroes ; but his ear caught the throb of a drum beaten afar to the eastward.

Of the Major's two body-servants it might be said that the one spoke seldom and the other never ; and again that Cai, who spoke seldom, was taciturn, while Scipio, who spoke never, was almost affable. In truth, the negro's was the habitual silence of one who, loving his fellows, spends all his unoccupied time in an inward brooding, a continual haze of day-dreams.

Scipio's day-dreams were of a piece with his loyalty, a reflection in some sort of his master's glory. He could never—he with his black skin—be such a man ; but he passionately desired to be honoured, respected, though but posthumously. And the emblazoned board in the church, appealing as it did to his negro sense of colour, had suggested a way. It is not too much to say that a great part of Scipio's time was lived by him in a future when, released from this present livery, his spirit should take on a more gorgeous one, as "Scipio Johnson, Esquire, late of this Parish," in scarlet twiddles on a buff ground.

He seated himself on the earthwork and, the better to commune with this vision, tilted his gold-laced hat forward over his eyes, shutting out the dazzle of the morning sun. Once or twice he shook himself, being heavy with broken sleep, and gazed across the ridges, then drew up his knees, clasped them, and let his heavy, woolly head drop forward, nodding.

. . . . . .

Let us not pursue those stages of conviviality

through which the Looe Diehards, having been seen home by the Troy Gallants, arrived at an obligation to return the compliment. Suffice it to say that Major Hymen and Captain Pond, within five minutes of bidding one another a public tearful farewell, found themselves climbing the first hill towards Lerryn with linked arms. But the Devil's Hedge is a wide one and luckily could not be mistaken, even in the uncertain light of dawn.

And, to pass over the minor incidents of that march, I will maintain in fairness (though the men of Troy choose to laugh) that the sudden apparition of a black man seated in the morning light upon the Devil's Hedge was enough to daunt even the tried valour of the Looe Diehards.

> "The De'il's awa', the De'il's awa',
> The De'il's awa' wi' th' Exciseman."

The eye notoriously magnifies an object seen upon a high ridge against the skyline; and when Scipio stood erect in all his gigantic proportions and waved both arms to welcome his beloved master, the Diehards turned with a yell and fled. Vainly their comrades of Troy called after them. Back and down the hill they streamed pell-mell, one on another's heels; down to the marshy bottom known as Trebant Water, nor paused to catch breath until they had placed a running brook between them and the Power of Darkness.

For the second time that night the Gallants rolled about and clung one to another in throes of Homeric laughter; laughter which, reverberating, shout on

shout, along the ridge and down among the tree tops, reached even to the meadow far below, where in the sudden hush of the lark's singing the merrymakers paused and looked up to listen.

But wait awhile! They laugh best who laugh last.

CHAPTER IX

BY LERRYN WATER

"O will you accept of the mus-e-lin so blue,
To wear in the morning and to dabble in the dew?"
Old Song.

MISS MARTY had duly visited the meadow and eaten and paid for her breakfast of bread and cream. But she had eaten it in some constraint, sitting alone. She had never asserted her position as the Major's kinswoman in the eyes of Miss Pescod and the ladies of Miss Pescod's clan, who were inclined to regard her as a poor relation, a mere housekeeper, and to treat her as a person of no great account. On the other hand, the majority of the merrymakers deemed her, no doubt, a stiff stuck-up thing; whereas she would in fact have given much to break through her shyness and accost them. For these reasons, the meal over, she was glad to pay her sixpence and escape from the throng back to the woodland paths and solitude.

The children by this time had grown tired of straying, and were trooping back to the village. Fewer and fewer met her as she followed the shore; the two slumberers were gone from the mossy bank; by-and-by the procession dried up, so to speak, altogether. She understood the reason when a drum

began to bang overhead behind the woods and passed along the ridge, still banging. The Gallants were returning; and apparently flushed with victory, since between the strokes she could hear their distant shouts of laughter.

At one moment she fancied they must be descending through the woods: for a crackling of the undergrowth, some way up the slope, startled and brought her to a halt. But no; the noise passed along the ridge towards the village. The crackling sound must have come from some woodland beast disturbed in his night's lair.

She retraced her way slowly to the spot where she had disembarked; but when she reached it, Cai and the boat had vanished. No matter; Cai was a trustworthy fellow, and doubtless would be back ere long. Likely enough he had pulled across to the farther shore to bear a hand in what Troy euphemistically called the "salvage" of the long-boats' cargoes. Happy in her solitude, rejoicing in her extended liberty, Miss Marty strolled on, now gazing up into the green dappled shadows, now pausing on the brink to watch the water as it swirled by her feet, smooth and deep and flawed in its depths with arrow-lights of sunshine.

She came by-and-by to a point where the cart-track turned inland to climb the woods and a foot-path branched off from it, skirting a small recess in the shore. A streamlet of clear water, hurrying down from the upland by the Devil's Hedge, here leapt the low cliff and fell on a pebbly beach, driving the pebbles before it and by their attrition wearing

out for itself a natural basin. Encountering a low ridge of rock on the edge of the tideway, the stones heaped themselves along it and formed a bar, with one tiny outlet through which the pool trickled continually, except at high spring tides when the river overflowed it.

Now Miss Marty, fetching a compass around this miniature creek, came in due course to the stream and seated herself on a fallen log, to consider. For the ground on the farther side appeared green and plashy, and she disliked wetting her shoes.

Overhead a finch piped. Below her, hidden by a screen of hazel, chattered the fall. Why should she wend farther? She must be greedy of solitude indeed if this sylvan corner did not content her.

And yet. . . . High on the opposite bank there grew a cluster of columbine, purple and rosy pink, blown thither and seeded perhaps from some near garden, though she had heard that the flower grew wild in these woods. Miss Marty gazed at the flowers, which seem to nod and beckon; then at the stream; then at the plashy shore; lastly at her shoes. Her hand went down to her right foot.

She drew off her shoes. Then she drew off her stockings.

By this time she was in a nervous flurry. Almost you may say that she raced across the stream and clutched at a handful of the columbines. In less than a minute she was back again, gazing timorously about her.

No one had seen; nobody, that is to say, except the finch, and he piped on cavalierly. Miss Marty

glanced up at him, then at a clearing of green turf underneath his bough, a little to her left. Why not ? Why should she omit any of May morning's rites ?

Miss Marty picked up her skirts again, stepped on to the green turf, and began to dabble her feet in the dew.

> " The morn that May began.
> I dabbled in the dew ;
> And I wished for me a proper young man
> In coat-tails of the blue. . . ."

" *Whoop ! Whoo-oop !* "

The cry came from afar ; indeed, from the woods across the river. Yet as the hare pricks up her ears at the sound of a distant horn and darts away to the covert, so did Miss Marty pause, and, after listening for a second or two, hurry back to the log to resume her shoes and stockings.

Her shoes she found where she had left them, and one stocking on the rank grass close beside them. *But where was the other ?*

She looked to right, to left, and all around her in a panic. Could she have dropped it into the stream in her hurry ? And had the stream carried it down the fall ?

She drew on one stocking and shoe, and catching up the other shoe in her hand, crept down to explore. The stream leapt out of sight through a screen of hazels. Parting these, she peered through them, to judge the distance between her and the pool and see if any track led down to it. A something flashed in her eyes, and she drew back. Then, peering forward again, she let a faint cry escape her.

On the pebbly bank beside the pool stood a man—Dr Hansombody—in regimentals. In one hand he held a razor (this it was that had flashed so brightly in the sunlight), in the other her lost stocking. Apparently he had been shaving, kneeling beside the pool and using it for a mirror; for one half of his face was yet lathered, and his haversack lay open on the stones by the water's edge beside his shako and a tin cup under which he had lit a small spirit-lamp; and doubtless, while he knelt, the stream had swept Miss Marty's stocking down to him. He was studying it in bewilderment; which changed to glad surprise as he caught sight of her, aloft between the hazels.

"Hullo!" he challenged. "A happy month to you!"

"Oh, please!" Miss Marty covered her face.

"I'll spread it out to dry on the stones here."

"Please give it back to me. Yes, please, I beg of you!"

"I don't see the sense of that," answered the Doctor. "You can't possibly wear it until it's dry, you know."

"But I'd *rather*."

"Are you anchored up there? Very well; then I'll bring it up to you in a minute or so. But just wait a little; for you wouldn't ask me to come with half my face unshaven, would you?"

"I can go back. . . . No, I can't. The bank is too slippery. . . . But I can look the other way," added Miss Marty, heroically.

"I really don't see why you should," answered the

Doctor, as he resumed his kneeling posture. "Now, to my mind," he went on in the intervals of finishing his toilet, "there's no harm in it, and, speaking as a man, it gives one a pleasant sociable feeling."

"I—have often wondered how it was done," confessed Miss Marty. "It looks horribly dangerous."

"The fact is," said the Doctor, wiping his blade, "I cannot endure to feel unshaven, even when campaigning."

He restored the razor to his haversack, blew out the spirit-lamp, emptied the tin cup on the stones, packed up, resumed his shako, and stood erect.

"My stocking, please!" Miss Marty pleaded.

"It is by no means dry yet," he answered, stooping and examining it. "Let me help you down, that you may see for yourself."

"Oh, I *couldn't!*"

"Meaning your foot and ankle? Believe me you have no cause to be ashamed of *them*, Miss Marty," the Doctor assured her gallantly, climbing the slope and extending an arm for her to lean upon.

"Those people—across the water," she protested, with a slight blush and a nod in the direction of the shouting, which for some minutes had been growing louder.

"Our brave fellows—if, as I imagine, the uproar proceeds from them—are pardonably flushed with their victory. They are certainly incapable, at this distance, of the nice observation with which your modesty credits them. Good Lord!—now you mention it—what a racket! I sincerely trust they will not arouse Sir Felix, whose temper—*experto*

crede—is seldom at its best in the small hours. There, if you will lean your weight on me and advance your foot—the uncovered one—to this ledge— Nay, now ! "

" But it hurts," said Miss Marty, wincing, with a catch of her breath. " I fear I must have run a thorn into it."

" A thorn ? " The Doctor seized the professional opportunity, lifted her bodily off the slope, and lowered her to the beach. " There, now, if you will sit absolutely still . . . for one minute. I command you ! Yes, as I suspected—a gorse-prickle ! "

He ran to his haversack, and, returning with a pair of tweezers, took the hurt foot between both hands.

" Pray remain still . . . for one moment. There —it is out ! " He held up the prickle triumphantly between the tweezers. " You have heard, Miss Marty, of the slave Andrew Something-or-other and the lion ? Though it couldn't have been Andrew really, because there are no lions in Scotland—except, I believe, on their shield. He was hiding for some reason in a cave, and a lion came along, and—well, it doesn't seem complimentary even if you turn a lion into a lioness, but it came into my head and seemed all right to start with."

" When I was a governess," said Miss Marty, " I used often to set it for dictation. I had, I remember, the same difficulty you experience with the name of the hero."

" Did you ? " the Doctor exclaimed, delightedly. " That *is* a coincidence, isn't it ? I sometimes

think that when two minds are, as one might say, attuned—"

"They are making a most dreadful noise," said Miss Marty, with a glance across the river. "Did I hear you say that you were victorious to-night?"

"Completely."

"The Major is a wonderful man."

"Wonderful! As I was saying, when two minds are, as one might say, attuned—"

"He succeeds in everything he touches."

"It is a rare talent."

"I sometimes wonder how, with his greatness—for he cannot but be conscious of it—he endures the restrictions of our narrow sphere. I mean," Miss Marty went on, as the Doctor lifted his eyebrows in some surprise, "the petty business of a country town such as ours."

"Oh," said the Doctor. "Ah, to be sure! . . . I supposed for a moment that you were referring to the—er—terrestrial globe."

He sighed. Miss Marty sighed likewise. Across in the covert of the woods someone had begun to beat a tattoo on the drum. Presently a cornet joined in, shattering the echoes with wild ululations.

"Those fellows will be sorry if Sir Felix catches them," observed the Doctor, anxiously. "I can't think what Hymen's about, to allow it. The noise comes from right under the home-park, too."

"You depreciate the Major!" Miss Marty tapped her bare foot impatiently on the pebbles; but, recollecting herself, drew it back with a blush.

"I do not," answered the Doctor, hotly. "I

merely say that he is allowing his men yonder to get out of hand."

"Perhaps *you* had better go, and, as the poet puts it, 'ride on the whirlwind and direct the storm,'" she suggested, with gentle sarcasm.

The Doctor rose stiffly. "Perhaps, on the whole, I had. Your stocking"—he lifted and felt it carefully—"will be dry in five minutes or so. Shall I direct Cai Tamblyn to bring the boat hither if I pass him on my way?"

She glanced up with a quivering lip.

"Isn't—isn't that a Sulphur Yellow?" she asked, pointing to a butterfly which wavered past them and poised itself for an instant on a pebble by the brink of the pool.

"Eh? By George! so it is." The Doctor caught up his shako and raced off in pursuit. "Steady now! . . . Is he gone? . . . Yes. . . . No, I have him!" he called, as with a swift wave of his arm he brought the shako down smartly on the pebbles and, kneeling, held it down with both hands.

"Where?" panted Miss Marty.

"Here . . . if you will stoop while I lift the brim. . . . Carefully, please. Now!"

Miss Marty stooped, but could not reach low enough to peer under the shako. She dropped on her knees. The Doctor was kneeling already. He showed her how to look, and this brought their cheeks close together. . . .

"Oh!" cried Miss Marty, suddenly.

"I couldn't help it," said the Doctor.

"And—and you have let him escape!" She

buried her face in both hands, and broke into a fit of weeping.

"I don't care. . . . Yes, I do!" He caught her hands away from her face and, their hiding being denied her, she leant her brow against his shoulder. With that, his arm crept around her waist.

For a while he let her sob out her emotion. Then, taking her firmly by both wrists, he looked once into her eyes, led her to a seat upon the pebble ridge, and sat himself down beside her.

For a long while they rested there in silence, hand clasped in hand. The uproar across the river had ceased. They heard only the splash of the small waterfall and, in its pauses, the call of bird to bird mating amid the hazels and the oaks.

. . . . . .

They drew apart suddenly, warned by the sound of dipping oars, the creak of thole-pins; and in a few seconds the rower hove into view, pulling up-stream as if for dear life. It was Cai Tamblyn. Catching sight of them, with a sharp exclamation he ceased rowing, held water, and bringing the boat's nose round, headed in for shore.

"You're wanted, quick!" he called to the Doctor. "They sent me off in search of you."

"Hey? What? Has there been an accident?"

Cai brought his boat alongside, glanced at Miss Marty, and lowered his voice.

"'Tis Lady Felix-Williams. These here conquerin' 'eroes of the Major's have swarmed down through the woods an' ran foul of the liquor. The Band in partikler's as drunk as Chloe, an' what with

horning and banging under her ladyship's window, they've a-scared her before her time. She's crying out at this moment, and old Sir Felix around in his dressing-gown like Satan let loose. Talk about Millenniums ! "

" Good Lord ! " Dr Hansombody caught up his haversack. " The Millennium ? I'd clean forgot about it ! "

Miss Marty gazed at him with innocent inquiring eyes.

" But—but isn't this the Millennium ? " she asked.

CHAPTER X

GUNNER SOBEY TURNS LOOSE THE MILLENNIUM

LET us return for a while to Talland Cove, and to the moment when Captain Arbuthnot's Dragoons broke ambush and charged down upon the Gallants.

Of all our company you will remember that Gunner Sobey passed for the readiest man. This reputation he now and instantly vindicated. For happening to be posted on the extreme left in the shadow of the western cliff, and hearing a sudden cry, "The French! The French!" he neither fell back with the rest of the crowd nor foolhardily resisted an enemy whose strength could not yet be measured: but leaping aside, and by great good luck finding foothold on the rocks to his left, he wriggled over the low ledge of the cliff and thence—now clutching at the grass bents or clusters of the sea-pink, now digging his fingers into the turf, but always flat, or nearly flat, on his belly—he wormed his way at incredible speed up the slope, found covert behind a tall furze bush, and surveyed for a few seconds the scene below him.

The outcries which yet continued, the splashing as of men in desperate struggle at the water's edge, the hoarse words of command, the scurrying lanterns,

the gleam of a hundred tossing sabres—all these told their own tale to Gunner Sobey. He arose and ran again ; nor drew breath until he had gained the top of the rough brake and flung himself over a stone wall into the dry ditch of a vast pasture field that domed itself far above him against the starry heavens.

Now let it be understood that what lent wings to Gunner Sobey's heels was not cowardice, but an overmastering desire to reach home with all speed. Let no reader mistake for panic what was in truth exceptional presence of mind.

The Major, you must know, had drawn up, some months before, and issued in a General Order, certain *Instructions in Case of Invasion*—in case, that is to say, the enemy should momentarily break through our coast defence and effect an actual footing. The main body of the Gallants would then, converting itself into a rearguard, cover the town and keep the foe in check, while separate detachments fell back swiftly, each to execute its assigned duty. For example :—

Detachments A and B would round up and drive off the cattle.

Detachment C would assist the escape of the women and children.

Detachment D would collect and carry off provisions, and destroy what was left.

Detachment E would set fire to the corn and the hayricks.

Detachment F would horse themselves and ride inland to warn the towns and villages, and make all

possible preparations for blowing up the bridges and otherwise impeding the enemy's advance after the rearguard's passage. And so on.

Gunner Sobey, though but a volunteer, possessed that simplicity of intellect which we have come to prize as the first essential in a British soldier. It was not his to reason why ; not his to ask how the French had gained a footing in Talland Cove, or how, having gained it, they were to be dislodged. Once satisfied of their arrival, he left them, as his soldierly training enjoined, severely alone. Deplorable as he might deem the occurrence it had happened ; and *ipso facto*, it consigned him, in accordance with general orders, to Detachment D, with the duties and responsibilities of that detachment. On these then—and at first on these, and these only—he bent his practical, resolute mind. It will be seen if he stopped short with them.

Picking himself up from the dry ditch, intent only on heading for home, he was aware of a dark object on the brink above him ; which at first he took for a bramble bush, and next, seeing it move, for a man.

It is no discredit to Gunner Sobey that, taken suddenly in the darkness, and at so hopeless a disadvantage, he felt his knees shake under him for a moment.

" Parley-voo ? " he ventured.

The proverb says that a Polperro jackass is surprised at nothing, and this one, which had been browsing on the edge of the ditch, merely gazed.

"I—I ax your pardon," went on Gunner Sobey, still slightly unhinged. "The fact is, I mistook you for another person."

The jackass drew back a little. It seemed to Gunner Sobey to be breathing hard, but otherwise it betrayed no emotion.

"Soh, then! Soh, my beauty!" said Gunner Sobey, and having clambered the ditch, reached out a caressing hand.

The donkey retreated, backing, step by step: and as Gunner Sobey stared a white blaze on the animal's face grew more and more distinct to him.

"Eh? Why, surely—soh, then!—you're Jowter Puckey's naggur? And if so—and I'll be sworn to you, seein' you close—what's become of th' old mare I sold him last Marti'mas?"

The beast still retreated. But Gunner Sobey's wits were now working rapidly. If Jowter Puckey pastured his jackass here, why here then (it was reasonable to surmise) he also pastured the old mare, Pleasant: and if Pleasant browsed anywhere within earshot, why the chances were she would remember and respond to her former master's call.

I repeat that Gunner Sobey was a ready man and a brave. Without pausing to reflect that the French might hear him, he put two fingers in his mouth and whistled into the night.

For a while there came no reply. He had his two fingers in his mouth to repeat the call when, happening to glance at the jackass, he perceived the beast's ears go up and its head slew round towards the ridge. Doubtless it had caught the distant echo of hoofs;

for half a minute later a low whinny sounded from the summit of the dark slope, and a grey form came lumbering down at a trot, halted, and thrust forward its muzzle to be caressed.

" Pleasant ! Oh, my dear Pleasant ! " stammered Gunner Sobey, reaching out a hand and fondling first her nose, then her ears. He could have thrown both arms around her ewe neck and hugged her. " How did I come to sell 'ee ? "

To be sure, if he had not, this good fortune had never befallen him.

Neither Gunner Sobey nor the mare—nor, for that matter, the jackass—had ever read the eighteenth book of Homer's Iliad ; and this must be their excuse for letting pass the encounter with less eloquence than I, its narrator, might have made a fortune by reporting. For once Gunner Sobey's readiness failed him, under emotion too deep for words. He laid a hand on the mare's withers and heaved himself astride, choosing a seat well back towards the haunches, and so avoiding the more pronounced angles in her framework. Then leaning forward and patting her neck he called to her.

" Home, my beauty ! I'll stick on, my dear, if you'll but do the rest. Cl'k ! "

She gathered up her infirm limbs and headed for home at a canter.

For a while the jackass trotted beside them ; but coming to the gate and dismounting to open it, Gunner Sobey turned him back. Possibly the mare had a notion she was being stolen, for no sooner had her rider remounted than she struck off into a lane on

the right hand, avoiding the road to Polperro where her present owner dwelt; and so, fetching a circuit by a second lane—this time to the left—clattered downhill past the sleeping hamlet of Crumplehorn, and breasted the steep coombe and the road that winds up beside it past the two Kellows to Mabel Burrow. Here on the upland she pulled herself together, and reaching out into a gallant stride, started on the long descent towards Troy at a pace that sent the night air whizzing by Gunner Sobey's ears. Past Carneggan she thundered, past Tredudwell; and thence, swinging off into the road for the Little Ferry, still downhill by Lauteglos Vicarage, by Ring of Bells, to the ford of Watergate in the valley bottom, where now a bridge stands; but in those days the foot-passengers crossed by a plank and a hand-rail. Splashing through the ford and choosing unguided the road which bore away to the right from the silent smithy, and steeply uphill to Whiddycross Common, she took it gamely though with fast failing breath. She had been foaled in Troy parish, and marvellously she was proving, after thirty years (her age was no less), the mettle of her ancient pasture. While he owned her, Gunner Sobey—who in extra-military hours traded as a carrier and haulier between Troy and the market-towns to the westward—had worked her late and fed her lean; but the most of us behold our receding youth through a mist of romance, and it may be that old worn-out Pleasant conceived herself to be cantering back to fields where the grass grew perennially sweet and old age was unknown. At any rate, she earned her place this night among the

great steeds of romance—Xanthus, Bucephalus, Harpagus, Black Auster, Sleipnir and Ilderim, Bayardo and Brigliadoro, the Cid's Babieca, Dick Turpin's Black Bess ; not to mention the two chargers, Copenhagen and Marengo, whom Waterloo was yet to make famous. As she mounted the last rise by Whiddycross Green her ribs were heaving sorely, her breath came in short quick coughs, her head lagged almost between her bony knees ; but none the less she held on down the steep hill, all strewn with loose stones, to the ferry slip ; and there, dropping her haunches, slid, checked herself almost at the water's edge, and stood quivering.

Billy Bates, the ferryman at Little Ferry, had heard the clatter of hoofs, and tumbled out to unchain his boat ; a trifling matter for him, since he habitually slept in his clothes.

" Hullo ! " said he, holding his lantern high and taking stock of the gunner's regimentals. " I allowed you'd be a messenger from Sir Felix. They tell me her leddyship is expectin'."

" I pity her then," gasped Gunner Sobey, and waved an arm. " Man, the French be landed, an' the country's ablaze ! "

Billy Bates set down his lantern on the slip and ran two trembling hands through his scanty locks.

" If that's so," he answered, " you don't get no boat of mine. There's Hosken's blue boat ; you'll find her moored off by a shoreline. Take *she* if you will ; he's a single man."

" Darn your old carcass ! " swore Gunner Sobey.

"I wish now I'd waited to cross over before tellin' 'ee!"

"I daresay you do. Well, good-night, soce. I'm off to tell the old woman."

Man is a selfish animal. As Gunner Sobey hauled Hosken's blue boat to shore, poor Pleasant came down the slip-way and rubbed her muzzle against his sleeve, dumbly beseeching him to fetch the horse-boat that she too might cross. He struck her sharply across the nose, and, jumping aboard, thrust off from the shore.

In telling Miss Marty that the town was deserted, Cai Tamblyn had forgotten the Vicar.

That good man, it is perhaps superfluous to say, had not sought his bed. He was a widower, and had no one to dissuade him from keeping vigil until daybreak. At ten o'clock, therefore, having seen to the trimming of his lamp and dismissed the servants to rest, he lit his study fire, set the kettle upon it, and having mixed himself a bowl of brandy-punch (in the concoction of which all Troy acknowledged him to be an expert), drew his armchair close to the genial blaze, and sat alternately sipping his brew and conning for the thousandth time the annotated pamphlet in which he had demonstrated exhaustively, redundantly, irrefutably, beyond possibility of disbelief or doubt, that with the morrow the world's great age must be renewed and the Millennium dawn upon earth.

For an hour and a half, or maybe three-quarters,

he sat reading and reassuring himself that the armour of his proof was indeed proof-armour and exposed no chink to assault ; and then—

The Vicar was a man of clean conscience and regular habits. He closed his eyes to review the argument. By-and-by his chin dropped forward on his chest. He slept. He dreamt. His dreams were formless, uneasy ; such as one might expect who deserts his bed and his course of habit to sleep upright in an armchair. A vague trouble haunted them ; or, rather, a presentiment of trouble. It grew and grew ; and almost as it became intolerable, a bell seemed to clang in his ears, and he started up, awake, gripping his chair, his brow clammy with a sudden sweat. He glanced around him. The fire was cold, his lamp burned low, his book had fallen to the floor. Was it this that had aroused him ? No ; surely a bell had clanged in his ears. His brain kept the echo of it yet.

He listened. The clang was not repeated ; but gradually his ears became aware of a low murmuring, irregular yet continuous ; a sound, it seemed, of voices, yet not of human voices ; a moaning, and yet not quite a moaning, but rather what the French would call a *mugissement*. Yes, it resembled rather the confused lowing of cattle than any other sound known to him. But that was inconceivable. . . .

He stepped to the window curtains through which the pale dawn filtered ; pulled them aside and started back with a cry of something more than dismay. The Vicarage faced upon the churchyard ;

and the churchyard was filled—packed—with cattle ! Oxen and cows, steers, heifers, and young calves ; at least thirty score were gathered there, a few hardier phlegmatic beasts cropping the herbage on the graves ; but the mass huddled together, rubbing flanks, swaying this way and that in the pressure of panic as corn is swayed by flukes of summer wind.

The Vicar was no coward. Recovering himself, he ran to the passage, caught his hat down from the peg, and flung wide the front door.

A little beyond his gate a lime-tree walk led down through the churchyard to the town. But gazing over the chines of the herd beyond his garden railing, he saw that through this avenue he could not hope to force a passage ; it was crowded so densely that dozen upon dozen of the poor brutes stood with horns interlocked, unable to lift or lower their heads.

To the right a line of cottages bounded the churchyard and overlooked it ; and between them and the churchyard wall there ran a narrow cobbled lane known as Pease Alley (*i.e.*, *pis aller*, the Vicar was wont to explain humorously). Through this he might hope to reach the Lower Town and discover some interpretation of the portent. He opened the gate boldly.

It was obvious, whatever might be the reason, that terror possessed the cattle. At the creaking of the gate the nearest brutes retreated, pressing back against their fellows, lowering their heads ; and yet not viciously, but as though to meet an unknown danger.

"Soh!" called the Vicar. "Soh, then! . . . upon my word," he went on whimsically, answering the appeal in their frightened, liquid eyes, "it's no use your asking me. You can't possibly be worse puzzled than I am!"

He thrust a passage between them and hurried down Pease Alley. Twice he paused, each time beneath the windows of a sleeping cottage, and hailed its occupants by name. No one answered. Only, on the other side of the alley, a few of the beasts ceased their lowing for a while, and, thrusting their faces over the wall, gazed at him with patient wonder.

At the lower end of the alley, where it makes an abrupt bend around the hinder premises of the Ship Inn before giving egress upon the street, the Vicar lifted his head and sniffed the morning air. Surely his nose detected a trace of smoke in it—not the reek of chimneys, but a smoke at once more fragrant and more pungent. . . .

Yes, smoke was drifting high among the elms above the church. The rooks, too, up there, were cawing loudly and wheeling in circles.

He dropped his gaze to his feet, and once more started back in alarm. A gutter crossed the alley here, and along it rushed and foamed a dark copper-coloured flood which, in an instant, his eye had traced up to the back doorstep of the Ship, over which it poured in a cascade.

Beer? Yes; patently, to sight and smell alike, it was beer. With a cry, the Vicar ran towards the doorway, wading ankle-deep in beer as he crossed

the threshold and broke in to the kitchen. The whole house swam with beer, but not with beer only ; for when, no inmate answering his call, he followed the torrent up through yet another doorway and found himself in the inn cellar, in the dim light of its iron-barred window he halted to gaze before one, two, three, a dozen casks of ale, port, sherry, brandy, all pouring their contents in a general flood upon the brick-paved floor.

Here, as he afterwards confessed, his presence of mind failed him ; and small blame to him, I say ! Without a thought of turning off the taps, he waded back to the doorway and leaned there awhile to recover his wits with his breath.

While he leaned, gasping, with a hand against the door-jamb, the clock in the church tower above him chimed and struck the hour of five. He gazed up at it stupidly, saw the smoke drifting through the elm-tops beyond, heard the rooks cawing over them, and then suddenly bethought himself of the bell which had clanged amid his dreams.

Yes, it had been the clang of a real bell, and from his own belfry. But how could anyone have gained entrance into the church, of which he alone kept the keys ? How ? Why, by the little door at the east end of the south aisle, which stood ajar. Across the alley he could see it, and that it stood ajar ; and more by token a heifer had planted her forefoot on the step and was nosing it wider. Someone had forced the lock. Someone was at this moment within the church !

The Vicar collected his wits and ran for it ; thrust

his way once more through the crowd of cattle, and through the doorway into the aisle, shouting a challenge. A groan from the belfry answered him, and there, in the dim light, he almost stumbled over a man seated on the cold flags of the pavement and feebly rubbing the lower part of his spine.

It is notoriously dangerous to ring a church bell without knowing the trick of it. Gunner Sobey having broken into the belfry and laid hands on the first bell-rope (which happened to be that of the tenor), had pulled it vigorously, let go too late, and dropped a good ten feet plumb in a sitting posture.

"Good Lord!" The Vicar peered at him, stooping. "Is that Sobey?"

"It *was*," groaned Sobey. "I'll never be the same man again."

"But what has happened?"

"Happened? Why, I tumbled off the bell-rope. You might ha' guessed *that*."

"Yes, yes; but why?"

"Because I didn' know how it worked." Gunner Sobey turned his face away wearily and continued to rub his hurt. "I didn't know till now, either, that a man could be stunned at this end," he added.

"Man, I see you're suffering, but answer me for goodness' sake! What's the meaning of all these cattle outside, and the taps running, and the smoke up yonder on the hill? And why—"

"I done my best," murmured Gunner Sobey

drowsily. "Single-handed I done it, but I done my best."

"Are you telling me that all this has been *your* doing?"

"A man can't very well be ten detachments at once, can he?" demanded the Gunner, sitting erect of a sudden and speaking with an air of great lucidity. "At least not in the Artillery. The liquor, now—I've run it out of every public-house in the town; that was Detachment D's work. And the hayricks; properly speakin', *they* belonged to Detachment E, and I hadn' time to fire more than Farmer Coad's on my way down wi' the cattle. *And* the alarm bell, you may argue, wasn' any business of mine; an' I wish with all my heart I'd never touched the dam thing! But with the French at your doors, so to speak—"

"The French?"

"Didn' I tell you? Then I must have overlooked it. Iss, iss, the French be landed at Talland Cove, and murderin' as they come! And the Troy lads be cut down like a swathe o' grass; and I, only I, escaped to carry the news. And you call this a millenyum, I suppose?" he wound up with sudden inconsequent bitterness.

But the Vicar apparently did not hear. "The French? The French?" he kept repeating. "Oh, Heaven, what's to be done?"

"If you was something more than a pulpit Christian," suggested Gunner Sobey, "you'd hoist me pickaback an' carry me over to hospital; for I can't walk with any degree of comfort, an' that's a

fact. And next you'd turn to an' drive off the cattle inland, an' give warning as you go. 'Tis a question if I live out this night, an' 'tis another question if I want to; but, dead or alive, it sha'n't be said of me that I hadn' presence of mind."

CHAPTER XI

THE MAJOR LEAVES US

TWO minutes later the Vicar, staggering up to the hospital door with Gunner Sobey on his back, came to a terrified halt as his ears caught the *tramp, tramp* of a body of men approaching from the direction of Passage Slip, which is the landing-place of the Little Ferry. He had scarce time to lower his burden upon the doorstep before the head of the company swung into view around the street corner. With a gasp he recognised them.

They were the Troy Gallants, and Major Hymen marched beside them. But they came with no banners waving, without tuck of drum—a sadly depleted corps, and by their countenances a sadly dejected one.

For the moment, however, in the revulsion of his feelings, the Vicar failed to observe this. He ran forward with both arms extended to greet the Major.

"My friend!" he cried tremulously. "You are alive!"

"Certainly," the Major answered. "Why not?" He was dishevelled, unshaven, travel-stained, haggard, and at the same time flushed of face. Also he appeared a trifle sulky

"What has happened?"

"Well"—the Major turned on him almost viciously—"*you* may call it the Millennium."

"But the French— ?"

"Eh? Excuse me—I don't take your meaning. *What* French ?"

"I was given to understand—we have been taking certain precautions," stammered the Vicar, and gazed around, seeking Gunner Sobey (but Gunner Sobey had dived into the hospital and was putting himself to bed). "You don't tell me the alarm was false!"

"My good Vicar, I haven't a notion at what you're driving; and excuse me again if in this hour of disgrace I find myself in no humour to halt here and bandy explanations."

"Disgrace ?"

"Disgrace," repeated the Major, gazing sternly back on his abashed ranks. His breast swelled; he seemed on the point to say more; but, indignation mastering him, mutely with a wave of the hand he bade the Gallants resume their march. Mutely, contritely, with bowed heads, they obeyed and followed him down the street, leaving the Vicar at gaze.

. . . . . .

What had happened? Why, this.—

After the *fiasco* in Talland Cove Captain Arbuthnot had formed up his Dragoons and given the word to ride back to Bodmin Barracks, their temporary quarters, whence Mr Smellie had summoned them.

He was in the devil of a rage. From the Barracks to Talland Cove is a good fourteen miles as the crow

flies, and you may allow another two miles for the windings of the road (which, by the way, was a pestilently bad one). To ride sixteen miles by night, chafing all the while under the orders of a civilian, and to return another sixteen, smarting, from a fool's errand, is (one must admit) excusably trying to the military temper. Smellie, to be sure, and Smellie alone, had been discomfited. Smellie's discomfiture had been so signally personal as to divert all ridicule from the Dragoons. Smellie, moreover, had made himself confoundedly obnoxious.

Smellie had given himself airs during the ride from Bodmin ; and Captain Arbuthnot had with an ill grace submitted to them, because the fellow knew the country. They were quit of him now ; but how to find the way home Captain Arbuthnot did not very well know. He rode forward boldly, however, keeping his eyes upon the stars, and steering, so far as the circuitous lanes would allow him, north by west.

Bearing away too far to the right, as men are apt to do in the darkness, he missed the cross-ways by Ashencross, whence his true line ran straight through Pelynt ; and after an hour or so of blind-man's-buff in a maze of cornfields, the gates of which seemed to hide in the unlikeliest corners, emerged upon a fairly good high road, which at first deceived him by running west-by-north and then appeared to change its mind and, receding through west, took a determined southerly curve back towards the coast. In short, Captain Arbuthnot had entirely lost his bearings.

Deciding once more to trust the stars, he left the high road, struck due north across country again and by-and-by found himself entangled in a valley bottom beside the upper waters of the same stream which Gunner Sobey had forded two hours before and some miles below. The ground hereabouts was marshy, and above the swamp an almost impenetrable furze-brake clothed both sides of the valley. The Dragoons fought their way through, however, and were rewarded, a little before dawn, by reaching a good turf slope and, at the head of it, a lane which led them to the small village of Lanreath.

The inhabitants of Lanreath, aroused from their beds by the tramp of hoofs and with difficulty persuaded that their visitors were not the French, at length directed Captain Arbuthnot to the village inn, the Punchbowl, where he wisely determined to bait and rest his horses, which by this time were nearly foundered. Being heavy brutes they had fared ill in the morass, and the most of them were plastered with mud to their girths.

The troopers, having refreshed themselves with beer, flung themselves down to rest, some on the settles of the inn-kitchen, others on the benches about the door, and others again in the churchyard across the road, where they snored until high day under the curious gaze of the villagers.

So they slept for two hours and more ; and then, being summoned by trumpet, mounted and took the road again, the most of them yet heavy with slumber and not a few yawning in their saddles and only kept

from nodding off by the discomfort of their tall leathern stocks.

In this condition they had proceeded for maybe two miles, when from a by-lane on their left a horseman dashed out upon the road ahead, reined up, and, wheeling his horse in face of them, stood high in his stirrups and waved an arm towards the lane by which he had come.

It took Captain Arbuthnot some seconds to recognise this apparition for Mr Smellie. But it was indeed that unfortunate man.

He had lost both hat and wig; his coat he had discarded, no doubt to be rid of its noisome odour: and altogether he cut the strangest figure as he gesticulated there in the early sunshine. But the man was in earnest—so much in earnest that he either failed to note, or noting, disregarded the wrathful frown with which Captain Arbuthnot, having halted his troop, rode forward at a walk to meet him.

"Back, Captain, back!" shouted Mr Smellie, pointing down the lane.

"I beg your pardon, sir"—the Captain reined up and addressed him with cold, incisive politeness—"but may I suggest that you have played the fool with us sufficiently for one night, and that my men's tempers are short?"

"Havers!" exclaimed the indomitable Smellie, rising yet higher in his stirrups and lifting a hand for silence. "I ask ye to listen to the racket down yonder. The drum, now!" (Sure enough Captain Arbuthnot, pricking his ears, heard the tunding of

a drum far away in the woods to the southward.) "Man, they've diddled us! While they put that trick on us at Talland Cove, their haill womankind was rafting the true cargo up the river. I've ridden down, I tell you, and the clue of their game I hold in my two hands here from start to finish. The brandy's yonder in Sir Felix's woods, and the men are lying around it fou-drunk as the Israelites among the pots. Man, if ye would turn to-night's laugh, turn your troop and follow, and ye shall cull them like gowans!"

"It is throwing the haft after the hatchet," hesitated Captain Arbuthnot, impressed against his will by the earnestness of the appeal. "You have misled us once to-night, I must remind you; and I give you fair warning that my troopers will not bear fooling twice."

With all his faults the Riding Officer did not lack courage. Disdaining the threat he waved his hand to the Dragoons to follow and put his horse at a canter down the leafy lane.

It is recorded in the High History of the Grail, of Sir Lohot, son of King Arthur, that he had a marvellous weakness; which was, that no sooner had he slain a man than he fell across his body. So it happened this night to the valiant men of Troy.

The Dragoons, emerging from the woods of Pentethy into close view of the house and its terracé and slope that falls from the terrace to the river, found themselves intruders upon the queerest of domestic dramas.

On the terrace among the leaden gods danced a little

man, wigless, in an orange-coloured dressing-gown and a fury of choler. At the head of the green slope immediately under the balustrade Major Hymen, surrounded by a moderately sober staff, faced the storm in an attitude at once dignified and patient.

"An idea has occurred to me," he put in at length with stately deliberation as Sir Felix paused panting for fresh words of opprobrium. "It is, sir, that overlooking the few minutes by which our salvoes were—er—antedated, you allow us to acclaim your latest-born as Honorary-Colonel of our corps."

"But," almost shrieked Sir Felix, "d—n your eyes, it's *twins*—and both *girls*!"

The Major winced. A rosy flush of indignation mantled his cheeks, and only his habitual respect for the landed gentry (whom he was accustomed to call the backbone of England) checked him on the verge of a severe retort. As it was, he answered with fine suavity.

"There is no true patriot, Sir Felix, but desires an accelerated increase in our population just now, whether male or female. I trust your good lady's zeal may be rewarded by a speedy recovery."

"Sir Felix fairly capered. Accelerated! Acc——" he began, and, choking over the word, turned and caught sight of the Dragoons as they emerged from the woods, the sunlight flashing on their cuirasses.

He fell back against the pedestal of a leaden effigy of Julius Cæsar and plucked his dressing-gown about him with fumbling bewildered hands. Was the whole British Army pouring into his peaceful park? What had he done to bring down on his head

the sportive mockery of heaven, and at such a moment ?

But in the act of collapsing he looked across the balustrade and saw the Major's face suddenly lose its colour. Then in an instant he understood and pulled himself together.

" Hey ? A hunt breakfast, is it ? " he inquired sardonically, and turned to welcome the approaching troop. " Good-morning, gentlemen ! You have come to draw my covers ? Then let me suggest your beginning with the plantation yonder to the right, where I can promise you good sport."

It was unneighbourly ; an action remembered against Sir Felix to the close of his life, as it deserved to be. He himself admitted later that he had given way to momentary choler, and made what amends he could by largess to the victims and their families. But it was long before he recovered his place in our esteem. Indeed, he never wholly recovered it : since of many dire consequences there was one, unforeseen at the time, which proved to be irreparable. Over the immediate consequences let me drop the curtain. *Male, male feriati Troes !* . . . As a man at day-break takes a bag and, going into the woods, gathers mushrooms, so the Dragoons gathered the men of Troy. . . . Mercifully the most of them were unconscious.

Even less heart have I to dwell on the return of the merrymakers :—

> " But now, ye shepherd lasses, who shall lead
> Your wandering troops, or sing your virelays ? "

Sure no forlorner procession ever passed down Troy

river than this, awhile so jocund, mute now, irresponsive to the morning's smile, the cuckoo's blithe challenge from the cliff. To the Major, seated in the stern sheets of the leading boat, no one dared to speak. They supposed his pecuniary loss to be heavier than it actually was—since the Dragoons had after all surprised but a portion of the cargo, and the leafy woods of Pentethy yet concealed many scores of tubs of *eau-de-vie ;* but they knew that he brooded over no pecuniary loss. He had been outraged, betrayed as a neighbour, as a military commander, and again as a father of his people ; wounded in the house of his friends ; scourged with ridicule in the very seat of his dignity. Maidens, inconsolable for lovers snatched from them and now bound for Bodmin Gaol, hushed their sorrow and wiped their tears by stealth, abashed before those tragic eyes which, fixed on the river reach ahead, travelled beyond all petty private woe to meet the end of all things with a tearless stare.

So they returned, drew to the quays, and disembarked, unwitting yet of worse discoveries awaiting them.

In the hospital Gunner Sobey, having dived into bed, with great presence of mind fell asleep. The Vicar had fled the town by the North, or Passage, Gate, and was by this time devouring a country walk in long strides, heedless whither they led him, vainly endeavouring to compose his thoughts and readjust his prophecies in the light of the morning's events—a process which from time to time compelled him to halt and hold his head between both hands.

The Major had slammed his front door, locked himself in his room, and would give audience to no one.

It was in vain that the inhabitants besieged his porch, demanding to know if the town were bewitched. Who had guttered their shops? Why the causeways swam with strong liquor? How the churchyard came to be full of cattle? What hand had fired Farmer Elford's ricks? In short, what in the world had happened, and what was to be done? They came contritely, conscious of their undeserving; but to each and all Scipio, from the head of the steps, returned the same answer. His master was indisposed.

Troy, ordinarily a busy town, did no business at all that day. Tradesmen and workmen in small groups at every street-corner discussed a mystery—or rather a series of mysteries—with which, as they well knew, one man alone was competent to grapple. To his good offices they had forfeited all right. Nevertheless, a crowd hung about all day in front of the Mayor's house, nor dispersed until long after nightfall. At eight o'clock next morning they reassembled, word having flown through the town that Dr Hansombody and Lawyer Chinn had been summoned soon after daybreak to a private conference. At eight-thirty the Vicar arrived and entered the house, Scipio admitting him with ceremony and at once shutting the door behind him with an elaborate show of caution.

But at a quarter to ten precisely the door opened again and the great man himself stood on the thres-

hold. He wore civilian dress, and carried a three-caped travelling cloak on his left arm. His right hand grasped a valise. The sight of the crowd for a moment seemed to discompose him. He drew back a pace and then, advancing, cleared his throat.

"My friends," said he, "I am bound on a journey. Your consciences will tell you if I deserved yesterday's indignity, and how far you might have obviated it. But I have communed with myself and decided to overlook all personal offence. It is enough that certain of our fellow-townsmen are in durance, and I go to release them. In short, I travel to-day to Plymouth to seek the best legal advice for their defence. In my absence I commit the good behaviour of Troy to your keeping, one and all."

You, who have read how, when Nelson left Portsmouth for death and victory, the throng pressed after him down the beach in tears, and ran into the water for a last grasp of his hand, conceive with what emotion we lined up and escorted our hero to the ferry; through what tears we watched him from the Passage Slip as he waved back from the boat tiding him over to the farther shore, where at length Boutigo's Van —"The Eclipse," Troy to Torpoint, No Smoking Inside—received and bore him from our straining eyes.

CHAPTER XII

A COLD DOUCHE ON A HOT FIT

THERE lived at Plymouth, in a neat house at the back of the Hoe, and not far from the Citadel, a certain Mr Basket, a retired haberdasher of Cheapside, upon whom the Major could count for a hospitable welcome. The two had been friends—cronies almost—in their London days; dining together daily at the same cook-shop, and as regularly sharing after dinner a bottle of port to the health of King George and Mr Pitt. Nor, since their almost simultaneous retreat from the capital, had they allowed distance to diminish their mutual regard. They frequently corresponded, and their letters included many a playful challenge to test one another's rural hospitality.

Now while the Major had (to put it mildly) but exchanged one sphere of activity for another, Mr Basket, a married man, embraced the repose of a contemplative life; cultivating a small garden and taking his wife twice a week to the theatre, of which he was a devotee. These punctual jaunts, very sensibly practised as a purge against dulness, together with the stir and hubbub of a garrison town in which his walled garden stood isolated, as it were, all day long, amid marchings, countermarchings, bugle-calls, and the rumble of waggons filled with material

of war, gave him a sense of being in the swim—of close participation in the world's affairs; failing which a great many folk seem to miss half the enjoyment of doing nothing in particular.

Mr Basket welcomed the Major cordially, with a dozen rallying comments on his healthy rural complexion, and carried him off to admire the garden while Mrs Basket enlarged her preparations for dinner at five o'clock.

The garden was indeed calculated to excite admiration, less for its flowers—for Mr Basket confessed ruefully that very few flowers would grow with him—than for a hundred ingenuities by which this defect was concealed.

"And the beauty of it is," announced Mr Basket, with a wave of his hand towards a black and white edging compound of marrow bones and the inverted bases of wine bottles, disposed alternately, "it harbours no slugs. It saves labour, too; you would be surprised at the sum it used to cost me weekly in labour alone. But," he went on, "I pin my faith to oyster shells. They are, if in a nautical town one may be permitted to speak breezily, my sheet anchor." He indicated a grotto at the end of the walk. "Maria and me did the whole of that."

"Mrs Basket is fond of gardening?" hazarded the Major.

"She's extraordinary partial to oysters," Mr Basket corrected him. "We made it a principle from the first to use nothing but what we consumed in the house. That don't apply to the statuary, of course, which I have purchased at one time and

another from an Italian dealer who frequents the Hoe. The material is less durable than one might wish ; but I could not afford marble. The originals of these objects, so the dealer informs me, are sold for very considerable sums of money : in addition to which," went on Mr Basket, lucidly, " he carries them in a tray on his head, which, in the case of marble, would be out of the question ; and, as it is, how he contrives to keep 'em balanced passes my understanding. But he is an intelligent fellow, and becomes very communicative as soon as he finds out you have leanings for Art. Here's a group, for instance—Cupid and Fisky—in the nude."

" But, excuse me—" The Major stepped back aud rubbed his chin dubiously, for some careful hand had adorned the lovers with kilts of pink wool in crochet work, and Psyche, in addition, wore a neat pink turnover.

" The artist *designed* 'em in the nude, but Maria worked the petticoats, having very decided views, for which I don't blame her. It keeps off the birds, too : not that the birds could do the same damage here as in an ordinary garden."

" I can well believe that."

" But we were talking of oyster shells. They are, as I say, our stand-by. To be sure, you can't procure 'em all the year round, like marrow bones for instance ; but, as I tell Maria, from a gardening point of view that's almost a convenience. You can work at your beds whenever there's an ' r ' in the month, and then, during the summer, take a spell, look about, and enjoy the results. Besides, it leaves

you free to plan out new improvements. Now, here "—Mr Basket caught his friend's arm, and leading him past a bust of Socrates ("an Athenian," he explained in passing; "considered one of the wisest men of antiquity, though not good-looking in *our* sense of the word"), paused on the brink of a small basin, cunningly sunk in centre of a round, pebble-paved area guarded by statuary—"I consider this my masterpiece."

"A fish-pond!"

"Yes, and containing real fish; goldfish, you perceive. I keep it supplied from a rain-water cistern at the top of the house, and feed 'em on bread-crumbs. Never tell *me*," said Mr Basket, "that animals don't reason."

"You certainly have made yourself a charming retreat," the Major admitted, gazing about him.

Mr Basket beamed. "You remember the lines I was wont to declaim to you, my friend, over our bottle in Cheapside?—

> "'May I govern my passion with an absolute sway,
> And grow wiser and better as my strength wears away,
> Without gout or stone, by a gentle decay. . . .'

For the last, it must be as Heaven pleases; but to some extent, you see, I have come to enjoy my modest aspirations. Only until to-day one thing was lacking. As poor Bannister used to quote it in the play—you remember him?—

> "'I've often wished that I had clear
> For life six hundred pounds a year,
> A something-or-other house to lodge a friend. . . .'

Ay, my dear Hymen," Mr Basket wrung the Major's

hand with genuine feeling, "you have been a long time putting off this visit; but, now we have you, I promise we don't let you go in a hurry. We will toast old days; we will go visit the play together as of old—yes, this very night. For, as luck will have it, the stock company at the Theatre Royal makes way to-night for—whom think you? No less a man than Orlando B. Sturge, and in his great part of Tom Taffrail in *Love Between Decks; or, The Triumph of Constancy;* a week's special engagement with his own London company in honour of the Duke of Clarence, who is paying us a visit just now at Admiralty House."

"Sturge?" echoed the Major, doubtfully.

"Good heavens, my dear fellow, don't tell me you haven't heard of him! Really, now, really, you bury yourself—believe me, you do. Why, for nautical parts, the stage hasn't his equal; and a voice, they tell me, like Incledon's in his prime! Mrs Basket and I have reserved seats, and, now I come to think of it, we had best step down to the theatre before dining, book yours, and arrange it so that we sit in a row. The house will be crowded, if 'tis only for a view of his Royal Highness, who will certainly attend if—hem!—equal to the effort."

"I had not heard of his being indisposed."

"Nor is he, at this hour. But now and then . . . after his fourth bottle. . . . However, as I say, the house will certainly be crowded."

"You'll excuse me, my friend, if I beg that you and your good wife will trot off to the theatre to-night without troubling about me. The—er—fact

is, I have come up to Plymouth primarily to consult a lawyer on a somewhat delicate business, and shall be glad of a few hours' solitude this evening to prepare my case. Do you happen, by the way, to know of a good lawyer? I wish for the very best advice procurable."

"Eh—eh? Delicate business, you say? My dear fellow, no entanglement, I hope? You always *were*, you know. . . . But I've said it a thousand times—you ought to get married; and Maria agrees with me . . . a man of your presence, carrying his years as you do. Eh? You're blushing, man. Then maybe 'tis the real thing, and you've come up to talk over settlements?"

"Tut-tut!" interposed the Major, who indeed had coloured up, and apparently not with annoyance. "There's no woman at all in the case I'm referring to." But here he checked himself. "Nay, I forgot; I'm wrong there," he admitted; "and if she hadn't had twins, I don't believe 'twould have happened."

"Curious circumstance to forget," murmured Mr Basket; but, perceiving that the Major was indisposed to be communicative, pressed him no further.

At dinner Mrs Basket, whose welcome had at first been qualified by the prospect of having to give to the unexpected guest her seat at *Love Between Decks* (on which, good soul, she had set her heart), showed herself in her most amiable light. She was full of apologies for deserting him. "If he had only given them warning. Not but that she was delighted; and even now, if the Major would make use of her

ticket . . . And to leave him alone in the house—for the 'maid' lived two streets away, and slept at home—it sounded so inhospitable, did it not? But she hoped the Major would find his room comfortable; there was a table for writing; and supper would be laid in the parlour, if he should feel tired after his journey and wish to retire to bed before their return. Would he be good enough to forbear standing upon ceremony, and remember the case-bottles in the cellaret on the right-hand of the sideboard? Also, by the way, he must take temporary possession of the duplicate latchkey; and then," added Mrs Basket, "we shall feel you are quite one of *us*."

The Major, on his part, could only trust that his unexpected visit would not be allowed to mar for one moment Mrs Basket's enjoyment of *Love Between Decks*. On that condition only could he feel that he had not unwarrantably intruded; on those terms only that he was being treated in sincerity as an old friend. "I am an old campaigner, madam. Permit me, using an old friend's liberty, to congratulate you on the flavour of this boiled mutton."

In short, the Major showed himself the most complaisant of guests. At dessert, observing that Mr Basket's eye began to wander towards the clock on the mantelpiece, he leapt up, protesting that he should never forgive himself if, through him, his friends missed a single line of *Love Between Decks*.

Mr Basket rose to his feet, with a half-regretful glance at the undepleted decanter.

"To-morrow night," said he, "we will treat old

friendship more piously. Believe me, Hymen, if it weren't for the seats being reserved—"

"My dear fellow," the Major assured him, with a challenging smile for Mrs Basket, "if you don't come back and tell me you've forgotten for three hours my very existence, I shall pack my valise and tramp off to an inn."

Having dismissed the worthy couple to the theatre —but a couple of streets distant—the Major retired with glass and decanter to his room, drank his quantum, smoked two pipes of tobacco very leisurely, and then, with a long sigh, drew up his chair to the table (which Mrs Basket had set out with writing materials) and penned, with many pauses for consideration, the following letter; which, when the reader has perused it, will sufficiently explain why our hero had blushed a while ago under Mr Basket's interrogatory.

"My dear Martha,—'Sweet,' says our premier poet, 'are the uses of adversity.' The indignity (I will call it no less) to which my fellow-townsmen by their folly, and Sir Felix by his perfidy, have recently subjected me, is not without its compensations. On the one hand it has disillusioned me; on the other it has removed the scales from my eyes. It has, indeed, inspired me with a disgust of public life; it has taught me to think more meanly of mankind as a whole. But while weaning my ambitions—perhaps too abruptly—from a wider sphere, it has directed me upon a happiness which has—dare I say it?—awaited me all the while beside the hearth.

"Let me avow, dear cousin, that when first this happy inspiration seized me, I had much ado—you know my promptitude of old—to refrain from seeking you at once and pressing my suit with that ardour which the warmth of my purpose dictated. On second thoughts, however, I decided to spare your emotions that sudden assault, and to make my demand in writing—in military phrase, to summon the garrison in form.

"Your tender consideration of my comfort over a period of years induces me to believe that a stronger claim on that consideration for the future may not be a matter of indifference to you. In short, I have the honour to offer you my hand, with every assurance of a lifelong fidelity and esteem. The station I ask you to adorn will be a private one. I am here to consult a lawyer how best I may release from the consequences of their folly the unfortunate men who betrayed me. This done, I lay down my chain of office and resign my commission. I will not deny that there are wounds; I look to domestic felicity to provide a balm for them. Hansombody, no doubt, will succeed me; and on the whole I am satisfied that he will passably fill an office which, between ourselves, he has for some time expected. I hope to return the day after to-morrow, and to receive the blushing answer on which I have set my heart.—Believe me, dear Coz, your affectionate

"Sol. Hymen."

Cynics tell us that one half of the proposals of marriage made by men are the direct result of pique.

How closely this proposal of the Major's coincided with the recoil of his public humiliation I do not pretend to determine. Certain it is that he had no sooner written and sealed his letter than the shadow of a doubt began to creep over his hot fit.

He started up, lit his long pipe, and fell to pacing the room with agitated strides. Was he doing wisely? Matrimony, he had sometimes told his friends, is like a dip in the sea; the wise man takes it at a plunge, head first. Yes, yes; but had he given it quite sufficient reflection? Could he promise himself he would never regret? He was not doubting that Miss Marty would make him an excellent wife. Admirable creature, she bore every test he could apply. She was gentle, companionable, intelligent in converse, yet never forward in giving an opinion; too studious, rather, to efface herself; in household management economical without being penurious; a notable cook and needlewoman; in person by no means uncomely, and in mind as well as person so scrupulously neat that her unobtrusive presence, her noiseless circumspect flittings from room to room, exhaled an atmosphere of daintiness in which it was good to dwell. No, he had no anxiety about Miss Marty. But could he be sure of himself? Had he really and truly and for ever put the ambitions of public life behind him? Might they not some day re-awaken as this present wound healed and ceased to smart?

If he sent this letter, he had burnt his boats. He halted before the table and stood for a while considering; stood there so long that his pipe went out un-

heeded. Ought he not to re-write his proposal and word it so as to leave himself a loophole? As he conned the name on the address, by some trick of memory he found himself repeating Miss Marty's own protest against the Millennium: "Why couldn't we be let alone, to go on comfortably?"

Confound the Millennium! Was it at the bottom of this too? The plaguey thing had a knack of intruding itself, just now, into all he undertook, and always mischievously. It was unsettling—Miss Marty's word again—infernally unsettling. He had begun to lose confidence in himself.

The room was hot. He stepped to the window, flung it open, and drank in the cool air of the summer night. Below him lay the garden, wherein Mr Basket's statuary showed here and there a glimmer in the velvet darkness. The Major turned back to the room and began to undress slowly; removing his wig, his coat, his waistcoat, and laying them on a chair. Next he turned out his breeches pockets and tossed his purse, with a handful of loose silver, upon the bed. With it there jingled the spare latchkey with which Mrs Basket had entrusted him.

He picked it up. . . . Yes, why should he not take a turn in the garden to compose his mind? In his present agitation he was not likely to woo slumber with success. . . . He slipped on his coat again and descended the stairs, latchkey in hand. A lamp burned in the hall, and by the light of it he read the hour on the dial of a grandfather's clock that stood sentry beside the dining-room door—five-and-twenty minutes past ten. The Baskets would not be

returning for another hour at least. He unlatched the front door, stepped out, and closed it softly behind him.

Now mark how simply—how, with a short laugh—by the crook of a little finger, as it were—the envious gods topple down the tallest human pride.

The Major descended the front steps, halted for a moment to peer at a statuette of Hercules resting on his club, and passed on down the central path of the garden with a smile for his worthy friend's foible. A dozen paces, and his toe encountered the rim of Mr Basket's fish-pond. . . .

The Major went into Mr Basket's fish-pond souse! —on all fours, precipitately, with hands wildly clawing the water amid the astonished goldfish.

The echo of the splash had hardly lost itself in the dark garden-alleys before he scrambled up, coughing and sputtering, and struggling to shore rubbed the water from his eyes. Now the basin had not been cleaned out for some months, and beneath the water, which did not exceed a foot and a half in depth, there lay a good two inches of slime and weed, some portion of which his knuckles were effectively transferring to his face. He had lost a shoe. Worse than this, as he stood up, shook the water out of his breeches and turned to escape back to the house, it dawned on him that he had lost the latchkey!

He had been carrying it in his hand at the moment of the catastrophe. . . . He sat down on the pebbled path beside the basin, flung himself upon his stomach and, leaning over the brink as far as he

dared, began to grope in the mud. After some minutes he recovered his shoe, but by-and-by was forced to abandon the search for the key as hopeless. He had no lantern. . . .

He cast an appealing glance up at the light in his bedroom window. His gaze travelled down to the fanlight over the front door. And with that the dreadful truth broke on him. Without the latchkey he could not possibly re-enter the house.

He unlaced and drew on his sodden shoe, and sat for a while considering. Should he wait here in this dreadful plight until his hosts returned ? Or might he not run down to the theatre (which lay but two short streets away), explain the accident to a doorkeeper, and get a message conveyed to Mr Basket ? Yes, this was clearly the wiser course. The streets—thank Heaven !—were dark.

He crept to the front gate and peered forth. The roadway was deserted. Taking his courage in both hands, he stepped out upon the pavement and walked briskly downhill to the theatre. The distance was a matter of five or six hundred yards only, and he met nobody. Coming in sight of the brightly-lit portico, he made a dash for it and up the steps, where he blundered full tilt into the arms of a tall doorkeeper at the gallery entrance.

" Hello ! " exclaimed the man, falling back. " Get out of this ! "

" One moment, my friend—"

" Damme ! " The doorkeeper, blocking the entrance, surveyed him and whistled. " Hi, Charley ! " he called ; " come and take a look at this ! "

A scrag-necked youth thrust his face forward from the aperture of the ticket-office.

"Well, I'm jiggered," was his comment. "Drunk, eh? Throw him out!"

"If you'll listen for a moment," pleaded the Major, with dignity, and began to search in the pockets of his sodden breeches. "I wish a message taken . . . but dear me, now I remember, I left my money upstairs!"

"*On* the gilded dressing-table beside the diamond tiyara," suggested the doorkeeper. "Or maybe you cast it down, careless, on the moonlit shore afore taking your dip!"

"My good man, I assure you that I am the victim of an accident. It so happens that, by a singular chain of mischance, I have not at this moment a penny about me. But if you will go to the reserved row of the pit and fetch out my friend Mr Basket—"

At this point the Major felt a hand clapped on his shoulder, and turning, was aware of two sailors, belted and wearing cutlasses, who, having lurched up the steps arm-in-arm, stood to gaze, surveying him with a frank interest.

"What's wrong, eh?" demanded the one who had saluted him, and turned to his comrade, a sallow-faced man with a Newgate fringe of a beard. "Good Lord, Bill, what is it like?"

"It *looks* like a wreck ashore," answered the sallow-faced sailor after a slow inspection.

"Talk about bein' fond of the theayter! He must have *swum* for it," said the other, and stared at the Major round-eyed. "You'll excuse me; Ben

Jope, my name is, bos'n of the *Vesuvius* bomb ; and this here's my friend Bill Adams, bos'n's mate. *As* I was sayin', you'll excuse me, but you must be fond of it—a man of your age—by the little you make of appearances."

" I was just explaining," stammered the Major, " that although, most unfortunately, I have left my purse at home—"

But here he paused as Mr Jope looked at Mr Adams, and Mr Adams answered with a slow and thoughtful wink.

" Go where you will," said Mr Jope cheerfully, stepping to the ticket-office ; " go where you will, and sail the high seas over, 'tis wonderful how you run across that excuse. Three tickets for the gallery, please ; and you, Bill, fall alongside ! " He linked an arm in the Major's, who feebly resisted.

" Lord love ye ! " said Mr Jope, " the lie's an old one ; but a man that played up to it better in appearances I never see'd nor smelt ! "

CHAPTER XIII

A VERY HOT PRESS

THE performance of *Love Between Decks* had reached its famous fourth act, in which Tom Taffrail, to protect his sweetheart (who has followed him to sea in man's attire), strikes the infamous First Lieutenant and is marched off between two marines for punishment. This scene, as everyone knows, is laid on the upper deck of his Majesty's ship *Poseidon* (of seventy-four guns), and the management, as a condition of engaging Mr Orlando B. Sturge (who was exacting in details), had mounted it, at great expense, with a couple of lifelike guns, R. and L., and for background the overhang of the quarter-deck, with rails and a mizzen-mast of real timber against a painted cloth representing the rise of the poop.

At the moment when our Major entered the gallery, the heated atmosphere of which well-nigh robbed him of breath, Tom Taffrail had taken up his position on the prompt side, close down by the footlights, and thrown himself into attitude to deliver the speech of manly defiance which provokes the Wicked Lieutenant to descend into the waist of the ship and receive the well-merited weight of the hero's fist. The hero, with one foot planted on a coil of real rope and one arm supporting the half-inanimate

form of his Susan, in deference to stage convention faced the audience, while with his other arm uplifted he invoked vengeance upon the oppressor, who scowled down from the quarter-deck rail.

"Hear me, kyind Heaven!" declaimed Tom Taffrail, "for Heaven at least is my witness, that beneath the tar-stained shirt of a British sailor there may beat the heart of a *Man!*"——

As a matter of fact, Mr Sturge was clothed in a clean blue and white striped shirt, with socks to match, white duck trousers no less immaculate, with a huge glittering brass buckle on the front of his belt, two buckles of smaller size but similar pattern on his polished dancing shoes, and wore his hair in a natty pigtail tied with cherry-coloured ribbon.

—"Hear and judge betwixt me and yonder tyrant! Let the storm off Pernambuco declare who first sprang to the foretop and thence aloft to strike t'gallant yards while the good ship *Poseidon* careened before its hurricane rage! Ay, and when the main topm'st went smack-smooth by the board, who was it slid like lightning to the deck and, with hands yet glowing from the halliards, plucked forth axe and hewed the wreckage clear? But a truce to these reminders! 'Twas my duty, and, as a seaman, I did it!"

Here, having laid his tender burden so that her back rested against the coil of real rope, Mr Sturge executed the opening steps of a hornpipe, and advancing to the footlights, stood swaying with crossed arms while the orchestra performed the prelude to his most celebrated song.

At this point Mr Jope, who for some seconds had been breathing hard at the back of the Major's neck, clutched his comrade by the arm.

"You 'eard that, Bill?" he asked in a hoarse whisper.

"Ay," answered Bill Adams. "He slipped down from the t'gallant yards by the halliards."

"Would ye mind pinchin' me?"

"Where?"

"Anywhere; in the fleshy part of the ham for choice; not too vigorous, but just to make sure. He come down by the halliards. *Which* halliards?"

"Signal halliards, belike. Damme, why not? Aboard a vessel with the decks laid ath'artships—"

"An' the maintopm'st went smack-smooth—you *'eard* him? What sort o' spar—"

"Dunno"—Bill paused and audibly shifted his quid—"unless 'twas a parsnip. The mizz'n-m'st seems to have stood it, though her stays *do* lead to a brass-headed nail in the scuppers."

"In a gale off Pernambuco . . . 'twas his duty, and as a seaman he did it," quoted Mr Jope in a low voice thrilled with awe. "Bill, we must 'ave him. If he did but 'alf of it, we must 'ave him. In them togs, aboard the *Vesuvius* now . . . Lord love me, he's dancin'!"

"Ay, and he's going to sing."

"*Sing!*"

"Mark my word, he's going to sing," repeated Bill Adams with confidence; and, sure enough, Mr Sturge stepped forward and with a reproach-

ful glance at the empty Royal box uplifted his voice :

"When honest Jack across the foam
Puts forth to meet the Gallic foe,
His tributary tear for home
He wipes away with a Yow-heave-ho!
Man the braces,
Take you places,
Fill the tot and push the can;
He's a lubber
That would blubber
When Britannia needs a *Man!*"

"S'help us, Bill, what are they doing *now?*" gasped Ben Jope, as two groups of seamen, one at either wing, took up the chorus ; tailing on to a cable and heaving while they sang.

"Fishin' the anchor," said Bill pensively ; "*that's* what they're doin'. She carries her catheads amidships. The ship's all right, once you get the hang of her."

"Bill, we *must* 'ave him!"

"Hush it, you swab! He's beginning again."

"But when among the heaving clouds,
Aloft, alone, with folded arms,
He hangs *her* portrait in the shrouds
And feeds on Susan's glowing charms.
To th' horizon
Soft his sighs on
Angel wings the zephyrs fan,
While his feelings,
Deep revealings,
Prove that Jack remains a *Man!*"

"'Ear that, Bill?"

"O' course I 'ears it. Why not? I *knew* there was something funny wi' them shrouds. They carries the family portraits on 'em—it's all right, I tell you."

"But 'feeds,' he said."

"Meanin' the picter; though maybe they sling the meat-safe there as well. They *ought* to."

"They *couldn't!*"

"Why not? Well, then, p'raps they strikes now and then *in* a gale—off Pernambuco—along wi' the t'gallant yards. Stow yer talk, Ben Jope, and let a man listen."

The audience encored Mr Sturge's song vociferously; and twice he had to repeat it before they would suffer him to turn again and defy the still scowling Lieutenant.

"Ay, sir; the British seaman, before whose collective valour the crowned tyrants of Yurope shrink with diminished heads, dares to proclaim himself a *Man*, and in despite of any petty tyrant of the quarter-deck. Humble his lot, his station, may be. Callous he himself may be to the thund'ring of the elements or the guns of his country's foemen; but never will he be found irresponsive to female distress in any shape or form. Leftenant Vandeloor, you have upraised your hand against A Woman; you have struck her a Blow. In your teeth I defy you!" (Frantic applause.)

"My word, Bill, the Duke ought to been here to 'ear that!"

"But why isn't he here?" asked the Major.

"Well," answered Ben Jope slowly, with a glance along the crowded gallery and a wink at Bill Adams (but the Major saw neither the glance nor the wink), "to-night, d'ye see, 'twouldn't ha' been altogether the thing. He's not like you and me, the Duke isn't. He has to study appearances."

"I should have thought that, if his Royal Highness studied popularity, he could scarcely have found a better occasion."

"Look here," put in Mr Jope sharply, "if the Duke chooses to be drunk to-night, you may lay to it he knows his business. And look here again; I took you for a victim o' misfortun', but if so be as you're startin' to teach the R'yal family tact, w'y, I changes my opinion."

"If I could only find my friend Basket, or get a message taken to him," ingeminated the Major, whose teeth were chattering despite the tropical atmosphere of the gallery.

"Eh? What's that you're sayin'?" the seaman demanded in a sudden sharp tone of suspicion. "If there's a friend o' your'n in the gallery, you keep by me and point him out when the time comes. I ain't a-makin' no promise, mind; no more than to say it may be the better for him; but contrariwise I don't allow no messages, and you may belay to that!"

"But my friend is not in the gallery. He has a reserved seat somewhere."

"Then you may take it he don't *require* no message, bein' toler'bly safe. As for yourself, you stick to me. Understand? Whatever happens, you stick to me."

The Major did not understand in the least ; but their conversation at this moment was interrupted by a roar of applause from all quarters of the house as Tom Taffrail, with a realistic blow from the shoulder, laid his persecutor prostrate on the deck.

" Brayvo ! " grunted Bill Adams. " The lad's nimble enough with his fives, I will say, for all his sea-lawyerin'."

" We must 'ave him, Bill ; if I take him myself we must 'ave him ! " cried Ben Jope, dancing with admiration. " 'Tis no more than a mercy, neither, after the trouble he's been and laid up for hisself."

Into what precise degree of mental confusion Mr Jope had worked himself the Major could never afterwards determine ; though he soon had every opportunity to think it out at leisure.

For the moment, as a boatswain's whistle shrilled close behind his ear, he was merely bewildered. He did not even know that the mouth sounding the signal was Mr Ben Jope's.

As the crowd to right and left of him surged to its feet, he saw at intervals along the gallery, sailor after sailor leap up with drawn cutlass. He saw some forcing their way to the exits ; and as the packed throng, swaying backwards, bore him to the giddy edge of the gallery rails, he saw the whole audience rise from their seats with white upturned faces.

" The Press ! " called someone. Half a dozen, then twenty, then a hundred voices took up the cry :

"The Press! The Press!"

He turned. What had become of Mr Jope?

What, indeed? Cutlass between teeth, Mr Jope had heaved himself over the gallery rail, caught a pillar between his dangling feet, and slid down it to the Upper Circle; from the Upper Circle to the Dress Circle; from the Dress Circle to the Pit. A dozen seamen hurrahed and followed him. To the audience screaming, scattering before them, they paid no heed at all. Their eyes were on their leader, and in silence, breathing hard, each man's teeth clenched upon his cutlass, they hounded after him and across the Pit at his heels.

It may be that this vivid reproduction of his alleged exploit off Pernambuco for the moment held Mr Orlando B. Sturge paralysed. At any rate, he stood by the footlights staring, with a face on which resentment faded into amaze, amaze into stupefaction.

It is improbable that he dreamed of any personal danger until the moment when Mr Jope, leaping the orchestra and crashing, on his way, through an abandoned violoncello, landed across the footlights and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Never you mind, lad!" cried Mr Jope cheerfully, taking the cutlass from between his teeth and waving it. "You'll get better treatment along o' we."

"What mean you? Unhand me—Off, I say, minion!"

"It'll blow over, lad; it'll blow over. You take my advice and come quiet—O, but we *want* you!—an' if you hear another word about this evening's work I'll forfeit my mess."

"Hands off, ruffian! Help, I say, there—Help!"

"Shame! Shame!" cried a dozen voices. But nine-tenths of the audience were already pressing around the doors to escape.

At a nod from Mr Jope, two seamen ran and cut the cords supporting the drop-scene.

"Heads, there! Heads!"

The great roller fell upon the stage with a resounding bang.

. . . . . .

With the thud of it, a hand descended and smote upon the Major's shoulder.

"Come along o' me. *You'll* give no trouble, anyway."

"Eh?" said the Major. "My good man, I assure you that I have not the slightest disposition to interfere. These scenes are regrettable, of course. I have heard of them, but never actually assisted at one before; still, I quite see the necessity of the realm demands it, and the realm's necessity is—or should be—the supreme law with all of us."

"And you can *swim*. You'd be surprised, now, how few of 'em could take a stroke to save their lives. Leastways," Mr Adams confessed, "that's *my* experience."

"I beg your pardon."

"Ben's impulsive. I over'eard him tellin' you to stick fast to him; but, all things considered, that's pretty difficult, ain't it? Never you mind; *I'll* see you aboard the tender."

"Aboard the tender?"

The Major stepped back a pace as the fellow's

absurd mistake dawned on him. "Why, you impudent scoundrel, I'm a Justice of the Peace!"

But here a rush of the driven crowd lifted and bore him against the gallery rail. A hand close by shattered the nearest lamp into darkness, and the flat of a cutlass (not Bill Adams') descending upon our hero's head, put an end for the while to speech and consciousness.

CHAPTER XIV

THE "VESUVIUS" BOMB

HE awoke with a racking headache in pitchy darkness; and with the twilight of returning consciousness there grew in him an awful fear that he had been coffined and buried alive. For he lay at full length in a bed which yet was unlike any bed of his acquaintance, being so narrow that he could neither turn his body nor put out an arm to lift himself into a sitting posture; and again, when he tried to move his legs, to his horror they were compressed as if between bandages. In his ear there sounded, not six inches away, a low lugubrious moaning. It could not come from a bed-fellow, for he had no bed-fellow. . . . No, it could be no earthly sound.

With a strangled cry he flung a hand upwards, fending off the horrible darkness. It struck against a board, and at the same instant his cry was echoed by a sharp scream close beside him.

"Angels and ministers of Gerrace defend us!" The scream sank to a hoarse whisper and was accompanied by a clank of chains. "Not dead? You—you are not dead?"

The Major lay back in a cold sweat. "I—I thought I was," he quavered at length. But at this point his mysterious bed seemed to sway for a

moment beneath him, and he caught his breath. "Where am I?" he gasped.

"At sea," answered the voice in a hollow tone.

"At sea!" In a sudden spasmodic attempt to sit upright, the Major almost rolled himself out of his hammock.

"Ay, poor comrade—if you are indeed he whom I saw lifted aboard unconscious from the tender—'tis the dismal truth.

> "Beneath the Orlop's darksome shade
> Unknown to Sol's bright ray,
> Where no kind chink's assistant aid
> Admits the cheerful day.

I am not, in the practical sense, seaman enough to determine if this noisome den be the precise part of the ship alluded to by the poet under the name of Orlop. But the circumstances correspond; and my stomach informs me that the vessel is in motion."

"The vessel?" echoed the Major, incredulous yet. "*What* vessel?"

"As if to omit no detail of horror, she is called, I believe, the *Vesuvius* bomb. Phœbus, what a name!"

It drummed for some seconds in the Major's ear like an echo.

"Yes, yes . . . the theatre," he murmured.

"The theatre? You were in the theatre? Then you saw *me?*"

"I beg your pardon."

"*Me*—Orlando B. Sturge. Yes, sir, if it be any consolation to you, know that I, Orlando B. Sturge, of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, am your tem-

porary partner in adversity, your co-mate and brother in exile, with the added indignity of handcuffs; and all by an error which would be absurd if it weren't so infernally serious."

"There has been some horrible mistake."

"A mistake, sir, for which these caitiffs shall pay dearly," Mr Sturge promised in his deepest tragedy voice.

"A Justice of the Peace!"

"Eh?"

"With a Major's commission!"

"Pardon, I think you must be confusing me with some other person. Orlando B. Sturge is my name, sir, and familiar—as I may say without vanity—wherever the Thespian art is honoured. But yesterday the darling of the public; and now, in the words of our national bard:—

"'Now lies he here
And none so poor to do him reverence.'

You are familiar with the works of Shakespeare, sir? Your speech, if you will allow me to say so, suggests a respectable education."

"I have dipped into them," answered the Major inattentively, absorbed in his own woes.

"My consolation is, this will get into the newspapers; and then let these ignorant ruffians beware!"

"The newspapers! God forbid!" The Major shuddered.

"Ha?" Mr Sturge drew back in dark surprise. "'Tis the language of delirium. He raves. What ho, without there!" he called aloud.

"What the devil's up?" responded a voice from the darkness behind the Major's head. It belonged to a marine standing sentry outside a spare sail which shut off the *Vesuvius's* sick bay from the rest of the lower deck.

"A surgeon, quick! Here's a man awake and delirious."

"All right. You needn't kick up such a row, need you?" growled the marine.

"Like Nero, I am an angler in a lake of darkness. You have handcuffed me, moreover, so that even if this accursed sty contains a bell-rope—which is improbable—I am debarred from using it. A light, there, and a surgeon, I say!"

The marine let fall the sail flap and withdrew, grumbling. But apparently Mr Sturge's mode of giving an order, being unlike anything in his experience, had impressed him; for by-and-by a faint ray illumined the dirty whitewashed beams over the Major's hammock, and four persons squeezed themselves into the sick bay—the marine holding a lantern and guiding the ship's surgeon, who was followed in turn by our friends Mr Jope and Mr Bill Adams.

The *Vesuvius* bomb, measuring but a little more than ninety feet over all, with a beam of some twenty-seven feet, and carrying seventy odd men and boys, with six long six-pounder guns and a couple of heavy mortars, could spare but scanty room for hospital accommodation. At a pinch, a dozen hammocks could be slung in the den which the marine's lantern revealed; but how a dozen sick men could recover there, and how the surgeon could move

between the hammocks to perform his ministrations, were mysteries happily left unsolved. As it was, the two invalids and their visitors crowded the place to suffocation.

"Delirious, you say?" hemmed the surgeon, a bald little man with a twinkling eye, an unshaven chin and a very greasy shirt frill. "Well, well, give me your pulse, my friend. Better a blister on the neck than a round shot at your feet, hey? I near upon gave you up when they brought you aboard—upon my word I did."

The Major groaned. "You seemed a humane man, sir," he answered feebly. "Spare me your blisters and get me put ashore, for pity's sake!"

The doctor shook his head. "My good fellow, we weighed an hour ago with a fresh northerly breeze. I haven't been on deck, but by the cant of her we must be clear of the Sound already and hauling up for Portsmouth."

"On your peril you detain me, sir! I'll have your fool of a captain broken for this—cashiered, sir—kicked out of the service, by heaven! I am a Justice of the Peace, I tell you!"

"And *coram*," put in Mr Sturge, "and *custalorum*. He'll make a Star-Chamber matter of it. . . . The poor fellow's raving, I tell you. A curse on your inhumanity! But I can wait for my revenge at Portsmouth. Approach, fellows, and knock off those gyves."

"Justice of the Peace!" echoed Ben Jope, paying no attention whatever to Mr Sturge, but turning on Bill Adams with round, wondering eyes. "I *told*

you he was something out o' the common. And you ain't had no more sense than to knock him over the head with a cutlass ! "

" I did not," protested Bill Adams. " He took it accidental, you being otherwise engaged ; an' I stuck to the creatur', thinkin' as how you *wanted* him."

" But *why* should I want him ? "

" Damned if I know. If it comes to that "—Bill Adams jerked a thumb towards the hammock containing Mr Sturge — " what d'ye want *him* for ? "

" Oh, *him ?* " answered Mr Jope with a grin. " In a gale off Pernambuco—"

" What on earth are you two talking about ? " asked the surgeon, who had seated himself on the deck and, with the lantern between his feet, was busily preparing a blister.

" Beggin' your pardon, sir, but you haven't been on deck yet ? You haven't *seen* the ducks we brought aboard last night ? "

" My good man, can I be in two places at once ? I have been up all night with Mr Wapshott, and the devil of a time he's given me. When they brought me this poor fellow, I hadn't time to do more than order him into hammock—indeed I hadn't. Now, then "—he stood on his feet again and addressed the marine—" fetch me a basin of water and I'll bathe his head."

" Is Mr Wapshott bad, sir ? " asked Ben Jope.

" H'm," the surgeon hesitated. " Well, I don't mind admitting to you that he was very bad indeed ;

but about six bells I got a draught to take effect, and he has been sleeping ever since."

"And you didn't see the Captain brought aboard, sir?"

"I did not. 'Brought,' you say?"

Ben Jope nodded his head, and for a moment or two watched in silence the sponging of our Major's scalp. "I've known this here ship in the variousest kinds o' weathers," he announced at length, with quiet conviction, "but they was fool's-play one and all compared with what's ahead of us."

"If it comes to that again," put in Bill Adams, "I don't see but this here Justice o' the Peace is the plum o' the whole bunch. Maybe"—he turned to his friend—"you ain't never seen a Justice o' the Peace? I 'ave."

"W'y," asked Ben Jope, "what's there peculiar about 'em?"

"I got committed by one some years ago," Mr Adams answered, with a grave effort of memory. "At a place called Farnham, it was, a way inland up the Portsmouth Road. Me and the landlord of a public there came to words, by reason he called his house The Admiral Howe, but on his signboard was the face of a different man altogether. Whereby I asked him why he done so. Whereby he said the painter didn't know How. Whereby I knocked him down, and he called in the constables and swore he'd meant it for a joke; and they took me afore a Justice; and the Justice said he wouldn't yield to nobody in his respect for our Navy, but here was a case he must put his foot down, and if necessary

with an iron hand ; and gave me seven days. Which I mention because I couldn't pay the fine, having no more than a few coppers besides what I stood up in, and was then on my way home from the wreck of the *Duck Sammy** brig, which went ashore on the back of the Wight. But if you ask me what was peculiar about the man, he was called Bart.—Sir Samuel Brooks, Bart.—and lived in a fine house as big as Greenwich Hospital, with a gold watch-chain across his belly you could have moored a pinnace by, and gold in his pockets correspondin'. Whereby I larned ever since to know my betters when ashore, and behave myself lowly and give 'em a wide berth. But this isn't one, nor the beginnings of one, for I took the liberty to s'arch his pockets."

" Indeed, sir," our hero appealed to the surgeon, " my name is Hymen—Major Solomon Hymen—of Troy, in Cornwall. On inquiry you will find that I am actually Chief Magistrate of that borough. Nay, I implore you—"

The surgeon, having bathed the wound and bound it with three strips of plaster, took up the blister, and was on the point of applying it, using persuasions indeed, but with the air of one who would take no denial, when a terrible outcry at once arrested him and drowned the Major's protestations.

The cry—it sounded like the roar of a wounded bull —came from the deck overhead. Its echoes sounded the very bowels of the ship ; but at the first note of it Ben Jope had clutched Bill Adams by the arm.

* *Deux Amis.* A gun-brig of that name was wrecked on the Isle of Wight on May 23rd, 1799.

"He's seen 'em!" he gasped. "Run, doctor, run—there's a dear soul—or he'll be doin' murder!"

"Seen what?"

"Run, I tell you! Come!" Suiting the action to the word, Mr Jope, still gripping his comrade's arm, rushed him out of the sick bay, the doctor and the marine at their heels. In the excitement, the Major tumbled out of his hammock, tore aside the sail-flap, and staggered after them along the dim and empty lower-deck to a ladder which led up to daylight.

How to describe the spectacle which met his dazzled eyes as he thrust his head above the hatchway? Aloft the *Vesuvius* spread her full sails in cloud upon cloud of dove-coloured grey (for, in fact, she carried very dingy canvas) against the blue of heaven, and reached along with the northerly breeze on her larboard quarter, heeling gently, yet just low enough for the Major to blink as his gaze, travelling beyond the lee bulwarks, caught the dazzle of foam knocked up and spreading off her blunt bows. But not long did he gaze on this; for in the scuppers under the bulwarks, in every attitude of complete woe, some prostrate, some supine, all depicted with the liveliest yellows and greens of sea-sickness beneath their theatrical paint, lay the crew of H.M.S *Poseidon*. Yes, even the wicked Lieutenant reclined there with the rest, with one hand upraised and grasping a ring-bolt, while the soft sway of the ship now lifted his garish tinselled epaulettes into the sunlight, now sank and drew across them, as upon a dial, the edge of the bulwarks' shadow.

Right above this disconsolate group, and almost

right above the Major's head as he thrust it through the hatchway—or, to be more precise, at the head of the ladder leading to the *Vesuvius's* poop—clung a little wry-necked, red-eyed, white-faced man in dishevelled uniform, and capered in impotent fury. But as when a child is chastised he yells once and there follows a pause of many seconds while he gathers up lung and thorax for the prolonged outcry, so after his first bull-roar Captain Crang, of the *Vesuvius* bomb, clung to the rail of the poop-ladder and wrestled for speech, while a little forward of the waist his crew huddled before the storm, yet (although the Major failed to perceive this) not without exchanging winks.

"Wha—*what?* In the name of ten thousand devils, what the —— is *that?*" yelled the Captain, and choked again.

"*In* a gale—*off* Pernambuco," murmured Mr Jope. "Steady, Bill; steady does it, mind!" Advancing to the foot of the ladder, he touched his forelock and stood at attention. "Pressed men, sir. Found in the theayter and brought aboard, as *per* special order."

The Captain's throat could be seen working within his disordered cravat. "Them! But—Oh, help me—look at 'em, Bos'n!"

"Sir!"

"Look at 'em!"

"It's not for me to object, sir. As you was sayin' they don't look it; but bein' ear-marked, so to speak—"

"Where is Mr Wapshott?"

"Below, sir, as I understand," answered Mr Jope demurely.

"You mean to tell me, you —— ——, that Mr Wapshott allowed—"

But just then, from a hatchway immediately behind Captain Crang, there slowly emerged—there uprose—a vision whereat our Major was not the only spectator to hold his breath. A shock of dishevelled red hair, a lean lantern-jawed face, desperately pallid; these were followed by a long crane-neck, and this again was continued by a pair of shoulders of such endless declivity as surely was never seen but in dreams. And still, as the genie from the fisherman's bottle, the apparition evolved itself and ascended, nor ceased growing until it overlooked the Captain's shoulder by a good three-fourths of a yard, when it put out two hands as if seeking support and stood swaying, with a vague, uneasy smile.

"D'ye hear me?" thundered the Captain, leaning forward over the ladder.

"Ay, ay, sir," Ben Jope answered cheerfully.

"Then what the —— are ye staring at, you son of a ——? Like a stuck pig, —— you! Like a clock-face! Like a glass-eyed cat in a —— thunderstorm! Like a—"

Here, as Captain Crang drew breath to reload, so to speak, a slight yawing of the ship (for which the helmsman might be forgiven) brought the tall shadow of the apparition athwart his shoulder, and fetched him about with an oath.

"Eh? So *there* you are!"

Mr Wapshott, still with his vague smile, titubated

a moment, advanced with a sort of circumspect dancing motion to the rail of the poop, laid two shaking hands upon it, heaved a long sigh, and nodded affably.

"*Tha's* all right. Where else ? "

"Look there, sir ! " Captain Crang wagged a forefinger at the crowd in the scuppers. "I want your explanation of *that !* "

Mr Wapshott brought his gaze to bear on the point indicated ; but not until he had scanned successively the deck gratings, the rise of the forecastle and the main shrouds.

"Re-markable," he answered slowly. "Mos' remarkable. One funniest things ever sawinmy life. Wha's yours ? "

"My what, sir ? "

"Eggs. Eggs-planation. Mus' ask you, sir, be so good hear me out."

"Good Lord ! " With a sudden look of horror Captain Crang let go his hold of the poop-ladder and staggered back against the bulwarks. "You don't mean—you're not telling me—that *I* brought that menagerie aboard last night ! " His gaze wandered helplessly from the first officer to the crew forward.

"Now then, Bill, steady does it," whispered Mr Jope, and saluted again. "You'll excuse me, sir, but Mr Wapshott was below last night when we brought you aboard from dinin' with his R'yal Highness."

"I remember nothing," groaned Captain Crang. "I never *do* remember when—and before the Duke too ! "

Mr Jope coughed. "His R'yal Highness, sir—if you'll let me say so—was a bit like what you might call everyone else last night. He shook hands very affectionate, sir, at parting, an' hoped to have your company again before long."

"Did he so? Did he so?" said Captain Crang. "And—er—could you at the same time call to mind what I answered?"

Mr Jope looked down modestly. "Well, sir, having my hands full at the time wi' this here little lot, I dunno as I can remember precisely. Was it something about the theayter, Bill?" he demanded, turning to Mr Adams.

"It wor," answered Mr Adams sturdily.

"And as how you'd never shipped a crew o' play-actors afore, but you'd do your best?"

"Either them very words or to that effect," confirmed Mr Adams, breathing hard and staring defiantly at the horizon.

"The theatre? . . . I was at the theatre?" Captain Crang passed a shaking hand over his brow. "No, damme! . . . and yet I remember now at dinner I heard the Duke say—"

Here it was Captain Crang's turn to stare dumbfounded at an apparition, as a pair of handcuffed wrists thrust themselves up through the main hatchway and were painfully followed by the rest of Mr Orlando B. Sturge.

"Oh, good Lord! Look! Is the ship full of 'em?" shouted the Captain.

"They ain't real," murmured Mr Wapshott soothingly. "You'll get accustomed. They began

by being frogs," he explained, with the initiatory air of an elder brother, and waved a feeble hand. "Eggs—if you'll 'low me, sir, to conclude—egg-sisting in the 'magination only. Go 'way—shoo!"

But Mr Sturge was not to be disembodied so easily. On the contrary as the vessel lurched, he sat down suddenly with a material thud and clash of handcuffs upon the poultry-coop, nor was sooner haled to his feet by the strong arm of Mr Adams than he struck an attitude and opened on the Captain in his finest baritone.

"'Look,' say'st thou? Ay, then, look! Nay, gloat if thou wilt, tyrant, miscreant—shall I say?—in human form! Yielding, if I may quote my friend here"—Mr Sturge laid both handcuffed hands on the shoulder of Bill Adams—"yielding to none, I say, in my admiration of Britain's Navy, I hold myself free to protest against the lawlessness of its minions. I say deliberately, sir, its minions. My name, sir, is Orlando B. Sturge. If that conveys aught to such an intelligence as yours, you will at once turn this vessel round and convey us back to Plymouth with even more expedition than you brought us hither."

Captain Crang fell back and caught at the mizzen shrouds.

"Was I so bad as all that?" he stammered, as Ben Jope, believing him attacked by apoplexy, rushed up the poop-ladder and bent over him.

"Lor' bless you, sir," said Mr Jope, "the best of us may be mistaken at times. But as I've al'ays

said, and will maintain, gentlemen will be gentlemen."

But Captain Crang, letting slip his grasp of the shrouds, plumped down on deck in a sitting posture and with a sound like the echo of his own name.

CHAPTER XV

UP-CHANNEL

"A wet sheet and a flowing sea,"

(sings Allan Cunningham),

"A wind that follows fast,
And fills the white and rustling sail
And bends the gallant mast;
And bends the gallant mast, my boys,
When, like an eagle free,
Away the good ship flies, and leaves
Old England on the lee."

I QUOTE these famous lines for their spirit rather than their accuracy. It is not every ship that can so defy the laws of nature as to run off a lee shore with a following wind; and the *Vesuvius* bomb, reaching up Channel with a rare nor'-nor'-westerly breeze, kept old England well to windward all the time. But as Mr Sturge explained to the Major, later in the day, "Without being a practical seaman, an artist can yet catch the spirit of these things and impart it to his fellow-men."

Mr Sturge was not criticising Allan Cunningham's lines, but talking, as usual, about himself. Many circumstances combined to induce a cheerful mood in him. To begin with, his manacles had been removed. Also he had overcome the morning's

nausea. The *Vesuvius*—a deep vessel for her size, like all bombships—was by no means speedy off the wind, and travelled indeed like a slug; but her frame, built for the heavy mortars, was extraordinarily stout in comparison with her masts, and this gave her stability. She was steering a course, too, which kept her fairly close in shore and in smooth water.

Indeed, so far as physical conditions went, Mr Sturge was enjoying a pleasure trip. His bold expostulations, moreover (for he did not lack courage), had considerably impressed Captain Crang, who, though not easily cowed as a rule, met them at a double disadvantage, being at once unable to recall the events of overnight, and firmly convinced that the whole misadventure was a trick of his Royal Highness. In this state of mind the Captain, shaken by his debauch, had almost collapsed before Mr Sturge's demand that the ship should be put about —or, as he expressed it, turned round—and navigated to the nearest point of shore.

"If," said Mr Sturge, with a comprehensive wave of the hand, "if along yon coast, in cove or bay or any natural recess—call it how you will—there lurk a bench of magistrates insensate enough, as you believe, to uphold this violation of a British subject's liberty, steer for them, sir! I challenge you to steer for them! I can say no fairer than that. Select what tribunal you please, sir, and I will demonstrate before it that I and my companions, in spite of appearances, are *no* seamen. You are to understand that by this disclaimer I cast no reflection upon even

the humblest toiler of the deep. Nay, while myself inept either to trim the sail or net the finny tribes, I respect those hardy callings—no man more so. Only I claim that my own profession exempts me from this respectable but uncongenial service; and that in short, sir, by forcibly trepanning me, you have rendered yourself liable to swingeing damages, besides inviting public attention to the fact that you were senselessly intoxicated last night."

This harangue, admirably delivered, took Captain Crang between wind and water. It was in vain he looked to his first officer for help. Mr Wapshott, still swaying by the poop rail, lifted and wagged an admonitory forefinger.

"No use y'rasking me," said Mr Wapshott. "*I* didn't dine with the Duke." He paused and asked with sudden inconsequent heartiness, "Well, and how did you get along, you two?"

"If only I could tell!" murmured Captain Crang, passing a hand over his brow.

"Not stuck-up, I hope? Affable? I'll bet any man sixpence he was affable. Mind you, I don't speak from 'xperience," went on Mr Wapshott, more in sorrow than in anger. "*I* don't dine out with Admirals of the Fleet. The Blood Royal don't invite James Wapshott to take a cup of kindness yet for auld lang syne, for auld lang syne, my dear, for auld . . . You'll excuse me, sir, some little emotion; Robert Burns—Rabbie—affecting beggar, mor' specially in his homelier passages. A ploughman, sir; and from Ayrshire, damme!

"'Wee sleekit crimson-tippit beastie—'"

"Are you addressing me, sir?" roared Captain Crang.

"Norratall. Field-mouse. *That*"—Mr Wapshott drew himself up—"*that's* the 'stonishing thing about it."

"Go to your cabin, sir," the Captain commanded; "and you, Mr What's-your-name, come below and explain yourself."

Thus, not without dignity, he withdrew from the field. But he was beaten; and in his cabin a few minutes later he capitulated. Mr Sturge having been convinced that the ship could not be turned around and headed back for Plymouth without grave inconvenience, and perhaps detriment to his Majesty's service, it was agreed that he and his company should be packed ashore immediately on reaching Portsmouth. The question of compensation was waived by consent; though Captain Crang shrewdly expressed his hope that, whatever steps Mr Sturge might take after consulting a solicitor, his Royal Highness would not be dragged into the affair.

In short, Mr Sturge reappeared on deck in high spirits. He had bearded a British officer—and a formidable one—in his den and had come off victorious. He had secured his own liberty and his comrades', and (as reflection told him) a first-class advertisement to boot. Altogether, he had done very well indeed; and Mr Jope, chastened by his own narrow escape from a situation which at one moment had promised to be serious, wisely left him all the credit of this lucky turn of affairs. Mr Jope, who ranked next to the Captain and First Officer on the

ship's executive, and actually ruled her during their indisposition, exacted no work from his prisoners; but was content to admire them from a distance—as, indeed, did the rest of the crew—retiring from time to time behind convenient shelters to hide their indecorous mirth. During the afternoon it may be said that Mr Sturge's troupe had the deck aft of the forecastle to themselves. Being unacquainted with naval usage, they roamed the poop indifferently with the main deck, no man forbidding them, while Captain Crang and Mr Wapshott slumbered below; the one of set purpose, in the hope of recapturing through the gates of horn, if not the complete data of last night's imbroglio, at least sufficient for a plausible defence; the other under the influence of sedatives administered by the Doctor.

"I should soon get used to this life, d'ye know?" announced Mr Sturge, approaching the Major with a jaunty, almost extra-nautical step, and clapping him, seaman fashion, on the shoulder.

It was the hour of sunset. The *Vesuvius*, bowling along merrily, a bare three miles off Berry Head, had opened the warm red-sandstone cliffs of Torbay; and the Major, leaning over the larboard bulwark, gazed on the slowly-moving shore in gloomy abstraction. He had been less fortunate than Mr Sturge in his encounter with the Captain, whom he had interrupted in the act of retiring to slumber.

"One moment, sir," he had begun, confidently enough. "The accomplished *artiste* to whose representations you have been good enough to listen, has told you—so far as he is concerned—the simple

truth. To a certain extent I can corroborate him. But I beg you to understand that he and I—if I may employ a nautical phrase — are not in the same boat."

"Who the devil may *you* be?" Captain Crang interposed.

"That, sir," answered the Major with dignity, "is precisely what I propose to explain. By an accident I find myself without a visiting card; but my name, sir, is Hymen—Major Hymen, sir—of the Troy Volunteer Artillery (better known to you, perhaps, as the Gallants), and Chief Magistrate of that ancient and picturesque little borough."

Captain Crang stared at him for a moment with lowered brows and jaw working as if it chewed the cud of his wrath.

"Look here," he replied. "You're the funny man of the troupe, I suppose? Comic Irishman and that sort of thing, hey?"

"I assure you, sir—"

"And I assure *you*, sir, that if you come the funny dog over me, I'll have you up to the gratings in two shakes of a duck's tail, and tickle your funny ribs with three dozen of the best. Understand?" The Captain paused, trembling with rage. "Understand, hey, you —— little barnstorming son of a ——? Made a mistake, have I? Cut your capers at my expense, would you, you little baldheaded runt! By—— if you pull another face at me, sir, you shall caper off the yardarm, sir; on a string, sir; high as Haman, sir! I hope, sir," wound up Captain Crang, recovering his calm, "that on this

point, at any rate, I have left no room for misunderstanding."

. . . . . .

It will excite no wonder that Mr Sturge found the Major somewhat irresponsive to his own jubilant mood.

"I should soon get used to this life," he repeated. "There's a spirit in it—a breeziness, I may call it—which is positively infectious. You don't find it so?"

"I do not," the Major confessed.

Mr Sturge pointed his toe and seemed about to execute the first steps of a hornpipe, but checked himself.

"Rough tongue, the Captain's?" he queried.

The Major swallowed a lump in his throat but did not answer.

"Hasty temper. Under the circumstances, we may make some little excuse, perhaps."

"I prefer not to discuss it. The man has insulted me."

"His bark is worse than his bite, I find," said Mr Sturge complacently. "And, after all, the moment you chose was not precisely opportune—was it, now?"

"I am not used, sir, to have my word doubted by any man."

"Well, but—appearances considered—you pitched it pretty strong, eh? Local magnate, and that sort of thing . . . it *did* seem like taking advantage of his condition."

"Advantage? Appearances? What do you mean, sir?"

The Major turned resentfully, and at the same instant recollected that he wore no wig. He blushed. His hand went up to his scalp.

"Makes a difference," said Mr Sturge. "Allow me." He drew from the breast of his shirt a small pocket mirror. "I carry it always. Useful—tittivate myself—in the wings."

"The wings?" echoed the Major dully, taking the glass. He gazed into it and started back with a cry.

What an image was there confronting him! Was this the face of Troy's Chief Magistrate? (forgive the blank verse). Were these the features—was this the aspect—from which virtue had so often derived its encouragement and wrongdoing its reproof? Was this the figure the ladies of Troy had been wont to follow with all but idolatrous gaze? Nay, who was this man—unshaven, unkempt, unbewigged, smeared with mud from head to foot, and from scalp to jaw with commingling bloodstains? The Major groaned incredulous, horrified; gazed, shuddered, and groaned again.

"Mind you," said Mr Sturge reassuringly, "I'm not calling the truth of your story into question for a moment. But under the circumstances you'll allow it was a trifle stiff."

"It is true to the last particular," insisted the Major, recovering his dignity.

"But come, now! Without a penny in your pocket, or so much as a scrap of paper to identify

you, you'll admit it was stiff ? Look here," he went on with a change of tone, slipping his arm amicably within the Major's, " I've an idea. Comrades in adversity, you know, and all that sort of thing. I've taken a liking to you, and can do you a good turn. Drop that yarn of yours—' yarn,' seafaring expression ; odd how one catches the *colour*, so to speak. Drop that yarn of yours. You're one of *us*, understand ? The Captain'll believe that ; indeed, he believes it already—called you a damned low-comedy man in my hearing. Very well ; soon as we anchor off Spithead, he outs with a boat and lands us ashore. I have his solemn promise. Leave me to square that bos'n fellow—Jope, or whatever he calls himself—and the job's as good as done."

" And do you seriously propose," interrupted the Major, folding his arms, " that I should pass myself off for a play-actor ? Never, sir ; never ! "

" Why not ? " asked Mr Sturge easily.

" I forbear, sir, to wound your feelings by explaining why your suggestion is repugnant to me. Let it suffice that I detest deceit, subterfuge, equivocation ; or, if that suffice not, let me ask if you do not propose, on reaching shore, to institute legal proceedings against this petty tyrant ? "

" Probably."

" Why, then, and how much more reparation does he not owe *me*, a Justice of the Peace ? Nay, sir, he shall pay me damages for this kidnapping ; but he has not stopped short there. He has used language to me which can only be wiped out in blood. My first business on stepping ashore will be to seek some-

one through whom I can convey my demand for satisfaction. With what face, think you, could I present this cartel if my own behaviour had been other than correct ? "

" You're not telling me you mean to fight him ? " asked Mr Sturge, convinced by this time that he had to deal with a lunatic.

" Pardon me." The Major bowed with grave irony. " This conversation, sir, was of your seeking. I have paid you, it appears, too high a compliment in assuming that you would understand what follows when a gentleman is called the son of a —— ! "

Mr Sturge shrugged his shoulders and walked forward to seek Ben Jope, whom he found by the forecastle hatchway engaged in slicing a quid of black tobacco.

" You'll excuse me," he asked, " but that rum little man who calls himself Hymen—where did he escape from ? "

" Escape ! " Ben Jope sprang to his feet, but catching sight of the Major, who had resumed his pensive attitude by the bulwarks, sat down again heavily. " Lord, but you frightened me ! That Hymen don't escape ; not if I know it. He's the apple of my eye, or becoming so. Now I tell you," said Mr Jope, beginning to slice again at his tobacco, then pausing to look up with engaging frankness ; " you took my fancy terrible for a few minutes ; but, come to see you by daylight, you're too pink."

Mr Sturge might have pressed for an explanation ; but at this juncture the first lieutenant of H.M.S.

Poseidon came forward, still with his painted scowl, and demanded to know, since the *Vesuvius* could not reach Portsmouth for many hours, when supper would be served, and what bedroom accommodation she provided.

CHAPTER XVI

FAREWELL TO ALBION !

SHORTLY after noon next day, the wind still holding from the N.N.W., though gradually falling light, the *Vesuvius* dropped anchor off Spithead, and Captain Crang at once ordered a boat's crew to convey the captives ashore.

The Major waved farewell to them from the deck. Though once again approached by Mr Sturge, he had repelled all persuasions. In his breast there welled up an increasing bitterness against his fate, but on the point of dignity he could not be shaken. He would, on the first fit occasion, have Captain Crang's blood ; but he was obdurate, though it cost him liberty for a while and compelled him to disgusting hardship, to stand on the strictest terms of quarrel.

He turned to find the boatswain at his elbow, eyeing him with sympathy and even a touch of respect.

" You done well," said Mr Jope. " You don't look it, but you done well, and I'll see you don't get put upon."

. . . . . .

The *Vesuvius*'s destination, as the Major learnt, was to join a squadron watching the Gallo-Batavian flotilla off the ports of Boulogne, Ambleteuse and Calais ; and the occasion of her dropping anchor off

Portsmouth on the way was a special and somewhat singular one ; yet no more singular than the crisis with which Great Britain had then to cope.

Behind the sandhills from Ostend around to Etaples lay a French army of 130,000 men, ready to invade us if for a few hours it could catch our fleets napping. To transport them Napoleon had collected in the ports of Ostend, Dunkirk, Calais, Ambleteuse, Vimereux, Boulogne and Etaples, 954 transports and 1339 armed vessels—gun-brigs, schooners, luggers, schuyts and prames ; and all these light vessels lay snug in their harbours, protected by shoals and sandbanks which our heavier ships of war, by reason of their draught, could not approach.

In particular, a double tier of vessels—one hundred and fifty in all—which were moored outside the pier of Boulogne, and protected by heavy shore batteries, excited while it baulked the rage of our gallant seamen manœuvring in the deep waters of the Channel.

Strange diseases suggest strange remedies. Our Admiralty, in the spring of the year, had been approached by an ingenious gentleman with the model of an invention by which he professed himself able to reach these hundred and fifty ships in Boulogne and blow them in air without loss or even danger to our fleet. This machine consisted of a box, about twenty feet long by three feet wide, lined with lead, caulked, tarred, ballasted and laden almost to the water's edge with barrels of powder and other combustibles. In the midst of the inflammable matter was placed a clockwork mechanism which, on the

withdrawal of a peg, would in a fixed time (within some ten minutes or thereabouts) ignite and explode the vessel.

A dozen of these engines, claimed the inventor, if towed within range and released, to be swept down upon Boulogne pier by the tide, would within a few minutes shatter and dispel the nightmare of invasion.

The Admiralty sanctioned the experiment, news of which had awakened some interest not unmixed with derision throughout the British Fleet; and the business which called the *Vesuvius* to Portsmouth was to take on board the first of these catamarans (as our sailors called them) and convey it across to the squadron watching Boulogne.

On the morning after the *Vesuvius's* arrival, two dockyard boats arrived with the hull of the machine in tow—it resembled nothing so much as a mahogany coffin—and attached her to the *Vesuvius's* stern by a kind of shoreline. This done, the officer in charge presented himself on board with the clockwork under his arm, and in his hand a letter for Captain Crang, the first result of which was an order to dress ship. Within half an hour the *Vesuvius's* crew had adorned her from bowsprit to trucks and from trucks to stern with bunting, as if for a Birthday; though, as Mr Jope observed, with a glance at the catamaran astern, the preparations pointed rather to a funeral. Mr Jope, as third officer of the ship, betrayed some soreness that his two superiors had not taken him into their confidence.

At eleven o'clock Captain Crang and Mr Wapshott appeared on the poop in full uniform, and a further

order was issued to load the guns blank for a salute.

Hitherto the Major had been but an idler about deck ; but finding the crew of a gun short-handed, he volunteered his services, and was immersed in the business of loading when a hand clapped him on the shoulder. Turning, he confronted the boatswain.

" And you go for to pretend for to tell me," said Mr Jope reproachfully, " that you're a amachoor ! "

The Major was about to explain that as an officer of artillery he understood the working of a gun, when a loud banging from the town drew all eyes shoreward ; and presently Captain Crang, who had been gazing in that direction through his glass, called to Mr Wapshott, who in turn shouted an order to man the yards.

As this was an order which the Major neither understood nor, had he understood it, could comply with, he remained on deck while the sailors swarmed aloft and disposed themselves in attitudes the mere sight of which turned him giddy, so wantonly precarious they seemed.

The strains of the National Anthem from a distant key-bugle drew his eyes shoreward again, and between the moored ships he descried a white-painted gig approaching, manned by twenty oars and carrying an enormous flag on a staff astern—the Royal Standard of England.

Not until the gig, fetching a long sweep, had made a half-circuit of the *Vesuvius* and fallen alongside her accommodation-ladder did the Major comprehend. Captain Crang, with Mr Wapshott behind him, had

stepped down the ladder and stood at the foot of it reverently lifting his cocked hat.

That rotund, star-bedecked figure in the stern sheet, beside the Port Admiral—that classic but full-blooded face crowned with a chestnut wig. . . . Who could it be if not his Royal Highness the Prince Regent ?

Yes, it was he. Had not our Major scanned those features often enough—in his own mirror ?

The Port Admiral was inviting Captain Crang to step into the gig. The Prince nodded a careless, haughty assent, shrinking a little, however, as Mr Wapshott passed down the clockwork of the catamaran for his royal inspection. Recovering himself, he glanced at it perfunctorily and nodded to the sailors to give way and pull towards the hull of the infernal machine.

The curiosity which had brought him down to Portsmouth to inspect it seemed, however, to have evaporated. The gig fell alongside the coffin-like log, and the Port Admiral, having taken the clockwork out of Captain Crang's hand, had launched into an explanation of its working when the Prince signified hurriedly that he had seen as much as he desired. Back to the ship the gig drifted on the tide, and Captain Crang, dismissed with a curt nod, stepped on to the ladder again, turned, and saluted profoundly.

As he did so, the Major, erect above the bulwarks, found speech.

" Your Royal Highness ! " he cried. " Nay, but pardon me, your Royal Highness ! If I may crave

the favour—explanation—a prisoner, unjustly detained—"

The Prince Regent lifted his eyes lazily as the bowman thrust off.

"What a dam funny-looking little man!" said he, nudging the Port Admiral, who had risen and was calling out the order to give way for shore.

"But, your Royal Highness!—"

The Major raised himself on tiptoe with arms outstretched after the receding boat. On the instant the ship shook under him as with an earthquake, and drowned his voice in the thunders of a royal salute.

. . . . . .

"The Emperor Jovinian, Mr Jope—"

"Who was *'e?*" Mr Jope interrupted.

Two days had passed, and the better part of a third. They seemed as many years to our hero as, seated on the carriage of one of the *Vesuvius's* starboard guns in company with the boatswain and Bill Adams, he watched through its open port the many twinkling smiles of the sea, and, scarce two leagues away, the coast of France golden against the sunset.

"I am not precisely aware when he flourished," said the Major, "but will make a point of inquiring when I return home. To tell you the truth, I heard the story in church, in a sermon of our worthy Vicar's, little dreaming under what circumstances I should recall it as applicable to my own lot."

"If it's out of a sermon," said Mr Jope, "you may fire ahead. But if, as you say, the man was taken for someone else, I thought it would be clearer to start by knowing who he *was*."

"It happened in this way. The Emperor Jovinian one sultry afternoon was hunting—"

"What—foxes?"

"Keep quiet," put in Mr Adams. "When he's telling you it happened in a sermon!"

"In the ardour of the chase he had left his retinue far behind; and finding himself by the shore of a lake, he alighted and refreshed himself with a swim in its cool waters. While he thus disported himself, a beggar stole his horse and his clothes."

Mr Jope smote his leg. "Now I call that a thundering good yarn! Short, sharp, and to the point."

"But you haven't heard the end."

"Eh? Is there more of it?"

"Certainly. The Emperor, discovering the theft, was forced to creep naked and ashamed to the nearest castle."

"What was he ashamed of?"

"Why, of being naked."

"I see. Damme, it fits in like a puzzle!"

"But at the castle, sad to say, no one recognised the proud Jovinian. 'Avaunt!' said the porter, and threatened to have him whipped for his impudence. This distressing experience caused the Emperor to reflect on the vanity of human pretensions, seeing that he, of whom the world stood in awe, had, with the loss of a few clothes, forfeited the respect of a slave."

"I see," repeated Mr Jope, as the narrator paused. "What became of the beggar?"

"I knew a worse case than that, even," said Bill Adams, turning his quid meditatively. "It hap-

pened to a Bristol man, once a shipmate of mine ; by name Zekiel Philips, and not at all inclined to stoutness when I knew him."

"Why *should* he be ? "

"You wait. His wife kept a slop-shop at Bristol, near the foot of Christmas Stairs—if you know where that is ? "

The Major, thus challenged, shook his head.

"Ah, well ; you'll have heard of O-why-hee, anyway—where they barbecued Captain Cook ? And likewise of Captain Bligh of the *Bounty*—Breadfruit Bligh, as they call him to this day ? Well, Bligh, as you know, took the *Bounty* out to the Islands under Government orders to collect breadfruit, the notion being that it could be planted in the West Indies and grown at a profit. When he came to grief and Government looked like dropping the job, a party of Bristol merchants took the matter up, having interests of their own in the West Indies, and fitted out a vessel—a brig she was, as I remember—called the *Perseverance*. Whereby this here friend o' mine, Zekiel Philips by name, shipped aboard of her. Whereby they made a good passage and anchored off one of the islands—Otaheety or not, I won't say—and took aboard a cargo, being, as they supposed, ord'nary breadfruit ; and stood away east-by-south for the Horn, meaning to work up to Kingston, Jamaica. But this particular breadfruit was of a fattening natur', whether eaten or, as you may say, ab-sorbed into the system through a part of it getting down to the bilge and fermenting, and the gas of it working up through the vessel. Whereby, the

breeze holding steady and no sail to trim for some days, the crew took it easy below, with naught to warn 'em, unless, maybe, 'twas a tight'ning o' the buttons. Whereby on the fifth day they ran a-foul of a cyclone ; and the cry being for all hands on deck, half a dozen stuck in the hatchway and had to be sawed loose. Whereby, in the meantime, she carried away her mainm'st, and the wreckage knocked a hole in her starboard quarter. Likewise, her stern-post being rotten, she lost a pintle, and the helm began to look fifty ways for Sunday. All o' which caused the skipper to lay to, fix up a jury rudder and run up for the nearest island to caulk and repair. But meantime, and before he sighted land, this unfortunate crew kept puttin' on flesh—and the cause of it hid from them all the time—till there wasn't on the ship a pair of small-clothes but had refused duty. Whereby, coming to the island in question, they went ashore, every man Jack in loin-cloths cut out o' the stun-s'le, and the rest of 'em as bare as the back of my hand. Whereby their appearance excited the natives to such a degree, being superstitious, they was set upon and eaten to a man. The moral bein'," concluded Mr Adams, " that a man may be brought low by bein' puffed out."

" Ay," said Mr Jope after a pause. " I never had no great acquaintance with poetry, but I bought a a pocket-handkercher once with a verse on it :

" ' Ri fal de ral diddle, ri fal de ral dee,
What ups and downs in the world there be ! '

And I don't believe you could blow your nose, however well eddicated, in a truer."

The Major sighed. He was a high-spirited man, as the reader knows, and I believe that, but for one cruel memory, he might have found a real enjoyment in the humour of the situation. Thanks to Mr Jope and Mr Adams, who had taken a genuine fancy to him, he found life on board the *Vesuvius* cheerful if not comfortable. The fare was Spartan, indeed, but, for a short holiday, tolerable. The prospect of seeing some real fighting excited him pleasurably, for he was no coward. Here, before his eyes, lay the coast of France ; the actual forts and guns with which his imagination had so often played. What a tale he would have to tell on his return ! And, by the way, how his poor Trojans must be suffering in his absence, without news of him ! He pictured that return. . . . Yes, indeed, it was at the expense of Troy that Fortune had conceived this practical joke. He could even smile, as yet, at the thought of the Baskets' dismay as they searched the house for him. He wondered if Mr Basket had forwarded his letter to Miss Marty, at the same time announcing his disappearance. Well, well, he would dry her tears. . . .

But upon this came the recollection of those cruel words :

" *What a dam funny-looking little man !* "

He might—he assuredly would—keep them a secret in his own breast. But they echoed there.

His vanity was robust. Again and again it asserted its health in his day-dreams, expelling, or all but expelling, that poisonous memory. Only at night, in his hammock, it awoke again—sinister,

premonitory. But as yet the man continued cheerfully incredulous. Fate was playing, less on him than through him, a rare practical joke—no more.

. . . . . .

On the eighth of June, at about nine o'clock in the evening, it occurred to Admiral Lord Keith that the wind and weather afforded an excellent opportunity of testing the *Vesuvius's* far-famed catamaran against the shipping moored off Boulogne pier. He signalled accordingly; and at nine-thirty, under the eyes of the squadron, a boat from the bomb-ship started to tow the infernal machine towards the harbour. By leave of Bill Adams, commanding, our Major made one of the crew of twelve.

In less than a quarter of an hour their approach was signalled by the enemy's vedettes to the forts ashore, which promptly opened fire. Mr Adams, having towed the catamaran within its proper range, with his own hand pulled the plug releasing the clockwork, and gave the order to cast off, leaving wind and tide to do the rest; which they doubtless would have done had not a gun from one of the French batteries plumped a shot accurately into the catamaran.

The catamaran exploded with a terrific report, and the wave of the explosion caught the retreating boat, lifted her seven feet, capsized, and brought her accurately down, bottom upwards.

A score of boats put out to the rescue, picked up the exhausted swimmers, and attempted to right and recover the boat, but abandoned this attempt on the approach of an overwhelming force of French.

These, coming up, seized on the boat and gallantly, under a short-dropping fire from our squadron, proceeded to right their prize ; and, righting her, discovered Major Hymen, clinging to a thwart, trapped as an earwig is trapped beneath an inverted flower-pot.

CHAPTER XVII

MISSING !

MISS MARTY had just finished watering her sweet peas and mignonette ; had inspected each of the four standard roses beside the front gate in search of green-fly ; had caught a snail sallying forth to dine late upon her larkspurs, and called to Cai Tamblyn to destroy it ; had, in short, performed all her ritual for the cool of the day ; and was removing her gardening gloves when a vehement knocking agitated the front door, and Scipio hurried to announce that a caller—a Mr Basket—desired to see her on important business.

" Mr Basket ? " she echoed apprehensively, and made at once for the parlour, where she found her visitor mopping his brow. Despite the heat, he was pale. In his left hand he held a letter.

" You will pardon me," he began in a flutter. " Am I addressing Miss Martha Hymen ? "

" You are, sir." Miss Marty clasped her hands in alarm at his demeanour. " Oh, tell me what has happened ! "

" All the way from Plymouth on purpose," answered Mr Basket. " Most mysterious occurrence . . . ate a good dinner and retired to his room ap-

parently in the best of health and spirits On our return from the theatre he was gone."

"Gone ? "

"Disappeared, vanished ! We searched the house. His watch and pocket-book lay on the bed, together with a certain amount of loose change. His wig, too . . . you were aware ? "

"I have gone so far as to suspect it. But what dreadful news is this ? Disappeared ? Leaving no clue ? "

"We are in hopes, my wife and I, that this may afford a clue. A letter, and addressed to you ; it lay upon his writing-table. We did not feel ourselves at liberty to break the seal. I trust—I sincerely trust —it may put a period to our suspense."

Miss Marty took the letter, glanced at the address and tore the paper open with trembling hands. She perused the first few sentences with a puckered, puzzled brow ; then of a sudden her eyes grew wide and round. Despite herself she uttered a little gasping cry.

"It contains a clue at least ? " asked Mr Basket, who had been watching her face anxiously. "Dear lady, what does he say ? "

"Nun—nothing," Miss Marty caught at the back of a Chippendale chair for support.

"Nothing ? " echoed Mr Basket blankly.

"Nothing—That is to say I can't tell you. Oh, this is horrible ! "

"But pardon me," Mr Basket insisted. "After travelling all the way from Plymouth ! "

"I can't possibly tell you," she repeated.

"But, madam, consider my responsibility! I must really ask you to consider my responsibility."

"If I could only realise it! Oh, give me time, sir!"

"Certainly, certainly; by all means take your time. Nevertheless, when you consider my distress of mind, I appeal to you, madam, to be merciful and relieve it. After travelling all this distance in the dark—"

"In the dark?" queried Miss Marty, with a glance at the window.

"Tormented by a thousand speculations. In my house, too! In good health, and apparently the best of spirits; and then without a word, like the snuff of a candle!"

"His brain must be affected," Miss Marty murmured, gazing at the letter again. The handwriting swam before her. "Excuse me, sir, I will not detain you a minute."

She ran from the room and upstairs to her room, her knees shaking beneath her. Heaven grant that the Doctor was at home! She agitated her window-blind violently and drew it down to the third pane. "You are wanted—urgent," was the message it conveyed.

Yes, he was at home. "I come, instantly," answered her lover's window; and in less than a minute, to her infinite relief, the Doctor emerged from his front doorway and came bustling up the street almost at a trot.

She ran down and admitted him. In her face he read instantly that something serious had happened; something serious if not catastrophical: but with

finger on lip she enjoined silence and led the way to the parlour.

"This gentleman has just arrived from Plymouth, with serious news of the Major."

"Serious? He is not ill, I trust?"

"Worse," said Mr Basket.

"But first," interposed Miss Marty, "you must read this letter. Yes, yes!"—blushing hotly, she thrust it into the Doctor's unresisting hands—"you have the right. Forgive me if I seem indecorous: but in such a situation you only can help me."

"Eh? Oh, certainly—h'm, h'm!—" The Doctor adjusted his glasses and began to read in a low mumbling voice. By-and-by he paused, then slowly looked up with pained, incredulous eyes.

"This is some horrible dream!" he groaned and, feeling his way to the Major's arm-chair, sank into it heavily.

"He swoons!" exclaimed Miss Marty. "One moment—a glassful of the Fra Angelico!"

She ran to the cupboard, found decanter and glasses, poured out a dose and came hurrying back with it. He declined it, waving her off with a feeble motion of the hand.

She appealed to Mr Basket. "Will *you*, sir?"

Mr Basket confessed afterwards that for the moment, excusably perhaps, he lost his presence of mind. She had motioned to him to administer the dose. He misunderstood. Taking the glass distractedly, he drained it to the dregs, clapped a hand to his windpipe, and collapsed, sputtering, in a chair facing the Doctor.

"Oh, what have I done?" wailed Miss Marty.

"He deserved it!"

The Doctor pulled himself together, stood erect, and, lurching forward, gripped Mr Basket by the shoulder.

"Sir, this lady is my affianced wife!"

"Would you—mind—tapping me in the back?" pleaded Mr Basket, between the catches of his breath.

"Not at all, sir." The Doctor complied. "As I was saying, this lady is my affianced wife. Though Major Hymen were ten thousand times my friend—by placing both hands on your stomach and bending forward a little you will find yourself relieved—though Major Hymen were ten thousand times my friend, it should be over my prostrate body, sir; and so you may go back and tell him!"

"But I can't find him!" almost screamed Mr Basket.

"He has disappeared!" quavered Miss Marty.

"It's the best thing he could do!" Dr Hansombody folded his arms and looked at Mr Basket with fierce decision. "Disappeared? Where?"

They answered him in agitated duetto. "Where indeed?" The Major had vanished, dissolved out of mortal ken, melted (one might say) into thin air. "If one may quote the Bard, sir, in this connection"—Mr Basket wound up his recital—"like an insubstantial pageant faded he has left not a rack behind; that is to say, unless the letter in your hands may be considered as answering that description."

"There's only one explanation," the Doctor declared. "The man must be mad."

Mr Basket considered this for a moment and shook his head. "We left him, sir, in the completest possession of his faculties. In all my long acquaintance with him I never detected the smallest symptom of mental aberration; and last night—good God! to think that this happened no longer ago than last night!"—Mr Basket passed a hand over his brow—"Last night, sir, I recognised with delight the same shrewd judgment, the same masculine intellect, the same large outlook on men and affairs, the same self-confidence and self-respect—in short, sir, all the qualities for which I ever admired my old friend."

"Nevertheless," the Doctor insisted, "he must have been mad when he penned this letter."

"Of the contents of which, let me remind you, I am still ignorant."

The Doctor glanced at Miss Marty, then handed the letter to Mr Basket with a bow. "You have a right to peruse it, sir. You will see, however, that its contents are of a strictly private nature, and will respect this lady's confidence."

"Certainly, certainly." Mr Basket drew out his spectacles, and, receiving Miss Marty's permission, seated himself at the table, spread out the letter and slowly read it through. "Most extraordinary! *Most* extraordinary! But you'll excuse my saying that while, unfortunately, it affords no clue, this seems to me as far as possible removed from the composition of a madman." He gazed almost gallantly over his spectacles at Miss Marty, who coloured. "In any case," he went on, folding up the letter and returning it, "the man must be found. I understand,

madam, that you are a relative of his ? Has he any others with whom we can communicate ? "

" So far as I know, sir, none."

" I have a chaise awaiting me on the other side of the ferry. With all respect, dear madam, I suggest it ; I am sorry indeed to put you to inconvenience—"

" You propose that Miss Marty, here, should accompany you back to Plymouth ? "

" That was the suggestion in my mind. And you, too, sir—that is, if you can make it square with your engagements. Mrs Basket will be happy to extend her hospitality. . . . Two heads are better than one, sir. We will prosecute our investigations together . . . with the help of the constabulary, of course. We should communicate with the constabulary, or our position may eventually prove an awkward one."

" Yes, yes ; the man having disappeared from your house."

" Quite so. Apart from that, I see no immediate necessity for making the matter public ; but am willing to defer to your judgment."

" That is a question we had better leave until we have seen the Chief Constable at Plymouth. To publish the news here and now in Troy would cause an infinite alarm, possibly an idle one. By the time we reach Plymouth our friend may have reappeared, or at least disclosed his whereabouts."

. . . . . .

Alas ! at Plymouth, where they arrived late that night, no news of the missing one awaited them. Mrs Basket, her face white as a sheet, her ample body

swathed in a red flannel dressing-gown, herself opened the door to the travellers as soon as the chaise drew up. For hours she had been expecting it, listening for the sound of wheels. Almost before the introductions were over she announced with tears that she had nothing to tell.

For a while she turned her thoughts perforce from the disaster to the business of making ready the bedrooms for her guests and preparing a light supper. But the meal had not been in progress five minutes, before, in the act of loading Miss Marty's plate, she sat back with a gasp.

"Oh, and I was forgetting! Misfortunes, they say, never come singly, and—would you believe it, my dear?—as I was walking in the garden this afternoon, thinking to calm my poor brain, I happened to look at the fish-pond and what do I see there but two of the gold-fish floating with their chests uppermost!"

"Chests, madam?" queried Dr Hansombody.

But sharp as his query was came a cry from Mr Basket. "The fish-pond?" He thrust back his chair, a terrible surmise dawning in his eyes. "And the fish, you say, floating—"

"Chest uppermost," repeated Mrs Basket, "and dead as dead."

"She *means*, on their backs," her husband explained parenthetically; "a fashion de parlour, as the French would say. Did you examine the pond? Heavens, Maria! did you examine the pond?"

"Elihu, you make my flesh creep! Why should I examine the pond? You don't mean to tell me—"

"My shrimping-net! Don't sit shivering there, Maria, but bring me my shrimping-net! And a lantern!" Mr Basket caught up a Sheffield-plated candle-sconce from the table, motioned the Doctor to fetch along its fellow, and led the way out to the front garden.

The night outside was windless, but dark as the inside of a hat.

Their candles drew a dewy glimmer from the congregated statuary: apparitions so ghostly that the Doctor scarcely repressed a cry of terror. Mr Basket advanced to the pond and set down his light on the brink.

"A foot deep . . . only a foot deep," he murmured. "It could not possibly cover him."

The two goldfish floated as Mrs Basket had described them. Mr Basket, taking the shrimping-net from his wife, who shrank back at once into darkness, plunged it beneath the water, deep into the mud. Dr Hansombody held a sconce aloft to guide him. The two ladies cowered behind a pedestal supporting the Farnese Hercules.

For a while nothing was heard in the garden but the splash of water as Mr Basket plunged his net again and again and drew it forth dripping. Each time as he drew it to shore, he emptied the mud on the brink and bent over it, the Doctor holding a candle close to assist the inspection.

As he emptied his net for maybe the twentieth time, something jingled on the pebbles. Mr Basket stooped swiftly, plunged his hand in the slime, and held it up to the light.

"Eh?" said the Doctor, peering close. "What? A latchkey?"

"My duplicate latchkey!" In spite of the heat engendered by his efforts, Mr Basket's teeth chattered. "My wife gave it to him the last thing."

He turned and drove his net beneath the dark water with redoubled energy. The very next haul brought to shore an even more convincing piece of evidence—a silver snuff-box.

It was the Major's. Mr Basket had seen his friend use it a thousand times; and called Miss Marty forward to identify it. Yes, undeniably it was the Major's snuff-box, engraved with "S.H.," his initials, in entwined italics.

The two male searchers, regardless of their small-clothes, now plunged knee-deep into the pond. For an hour they searched it; searched it from end to end; searched it twice over.

No further discovery rewarded them.

Here was evidence—tangible evidence. Yet of what? The Major had visited the pond during his hosts' absence at the theatre, and had dropped these two articles into it. How, if accidentally? If purposely, why? The mystery had become a deeper mystery.

A little after midnight the search was abandoned. Mrs Basket administered hot brandy-and-water to the two gentlemen, and the household retired to rest—but not to sleep.

At breakfast next morning, before seeking the Chief Constable, Mr Basket and the Doctor com-

pared notes. Each owned himself more puzzled than ever.

As it turned out, their discoveries led them straight away from the true explanation. The Chief Constable, when they interviewed him, was disposed for a brief while to suspect the press-gang. There had, in fact, on the night before last, been a "hot press," as it was called. At least a score of bodies of the Royal Marines, in parties of twelve and fourteen, each accompanied by a marine and a naval officer, had boarded the colliers off the new quay, the ships in Cattewater and the Pool, and had swept the streets and gin-shops. A gang of seamen, too, had entered the theatre and cleared the whole gallery except the women; had even descended upon the stage and carried off practically the whole company of actors, including the famous Mr Sturge. (This Mr Basket could confirm.) The whole town was in a ferment. He had already received at least seventy visits from inquirers after missing relatives.

But the discoveries in the fish-pond led him clean off the scent. No press-gang would enter a private house or a private garden such as Mr Basket's. Even supposing that their friend had fallen a victim to the press while walking the streets, they must admit it to be inconceivable that he should return and cast a latchkey and a snuff-box into Mr Basket's fish-pond.

"*Cui bono?*" asked the Chief Constable.

"I beg your pardon?" said Mr Basket.

"Well, in other words, what do you suggest he did it for? It's an expression we use in these cases."

The Doctor granted the force of the Chief Constable's reasoning, but suggested that there could be no harm in rowing round the Fleet and making inquiries.

The Chief Constable answered again that the squadron—it was no more than a squadron—had taken precious good care to time the press for the eve of sailing; had in fact weighed anchor in the small hours of the morning, and by this time had probably joined Admiral Cornwallis's fleet off Brest.

What was to be done?

"In my belief," said the Chief Constable, "it's a case of foul play. Mind, I'm not accusing anyone," he went on; "but this person disappeared from your house, Mr Basket, and in your place I'd put myself right with the public by getting out a handbill at once."

This dreadful possibility of coming under public suspicion had never occurred to Mr Basket. He begged to be supplied at once with pen, ink and paper.

"'Lost, stolen or strayed'—is that how you begin?"

"If you ask me," said the Chief Constable, "I'd put him down as 'Missing.' It's more usual."

"'Missing,' then. 'On the night of May 2nd—'"

"From your house."

"Must that go in?" Mr Basket pleaded.

"If you want to put yourself right with the public."

"Yes, yes—'from The Retreat, East Hoe, the residence of E. Basket, Esq., on the night of May 2nd,

between the hours of 7 and 11 p.m., a Gentleman—' "
Mr Basket paused.

" We must describe him," said the Doctor.

" I am coming to that. ' A Gentleman, answering to the name of Hymen—' "

" Why ' answering ' ? "

Mr Basket ran his pen through the word. " The fact is," he explained, " I've only written out a thing of this sort once before in my life ; and that was when Mrs Basket missed a black-and-tan terrier. H'm, let me see. . . . Between the hours of 7 and 11 p.m., Solomon Hymen, Esquire, and Justice of the Peace, Major of the Troy Volunteer Artillery. The missing gentleman was of imposing exterior—"

" Height five feet, three inches," said the Doctor.

" Eh ? Are you sure ? "

" As medical officer of the Troy Artillery, I keep account of every man in the corps ; height, chest measurement, waist measurement, any peculiarity of structure, any mole, cicatrix, birth-mark and so on. I began to take these notes at the Major's own instance, for purposes of identification on the field of battle. Little did I dream, as I passed the tape around my admired friend, that *his* proportions would ever be the subject of this melancholy curiosity ! "

" It reminds me," said Mr Basket, " of a group in my garden entitled *Finding the body of Harold*. Five feet three, you say ? I had better scratch out ' imposing exterior ' ; or, stay !—we'll alter it to ' carriage.' "

" Chest, thirty-six inches ; waist, forty-three

inches; complexion—does that come next?" Doctor Hansombody appealed to the Chief Constable, who nodded.

"Complexion, features, colour of hair, of eyes . . . any order you please."

"We must leave out all allusion to his hair, I think," said Mr Basket; "and, by the way, I suppose the—er—authorities will desire to take possession of any other little odds-and-ends our friend left behind him? Complexion, clear and sanguine; strongly-marked features. His eye, sir, was like Mars, to threaten and command; but I forget the precise colour at this moment. We might, perhaps, content ourselves with 'piercing.' If I allow myself to be betrayed into a description of his moral qualities—"

"Unnecessary," put in the Chief Constable.

"And yet, sir, it was by his moral qualities that my friend ever impressed himself most distinctly on all who met him. Alas! that I should be speaking of him in the past tense! He was a man, sir, as Shakespeare puts it:

"Take him for all in all,
We shall not look upon his like again."

"A most happy description, Mr Basket," the Doctor agreed. "Would you mind saying it over again, that I may commit it to memory?"

Mr Basket obligingly repeated it.

"Most happy! Shakespeare, you say? Thank you." The Doctor copied it into his pocket-book among the prescriptions.

"One might add, perhaps," Mr Basket submitted

respectfully, "that a mere physical description, however animated, cannot do justice to my friend's moral grandeur, which, indeed, would require the brush of a Michael Angelo."

The Chief Constable inquired what reward they proposed to offer.

"Ah, yes; to be sure!" Taken somewhat unexpectedly, Mr Basket and the Doctor exchanged glances.

"On behalf of the relatives, now—" began Mr Basket.

"So far as I know, Miss Martha was the one relative he had in the world," answered the Doctor.

"So much the better, my friend, seeing that you have (as I understand) her entire confidence."

"I was about to suggest that—circumstances having forced you into prominence—to take the lead, so to speak, in this unhappy affair—"

"But why do we talk of price?" interposed Mr Basket briskly, "seeing that the loss, if loss it be, is nothing short of irreparable? To my mind there is something—er—"

"Desecrating," suggested the Doctor.

"Quite so—desecrating—in this reduction of our poor friend to pounds, shillings, and pence."

"Nevertheless it is usual to name a sum," the Chief Constable assured them. "Shall we say fifty pounds?" Mr Basket took off his spectacles and wiped them with a trembling hand. Dr Hansombody stood considering, pulling thoughtfully at his lower lip.

"I think I can undertake," he suggested, "that

the Town Council will contribute a moiety of that sum. Something can be done by private subscription."

Mr Basket brightened visibly. "Put it at fifty pounds, then," he commanded, with a wave of the hand. "Should Providence see fit to restore him to us, our friend, as a reasonable man, will doubtless discharge some part of the expenses."

Accordingly the bill was drafted, and the Chief Constable, after running his blue pencil through some of its more monumental periods, engaged to have it printed and distributed.

"Do you know," confessed Mr Basket, as he and the Doctor walked homewards, "I felt all the while as if we were composing our friend's epitaph. I have a presentiment—"

"Do not utter it, my dear sir!" the Doctor entreated.

"He was a man—"

"Yes, yes; 'taking one thing with another, it is more than likely we shall never see him again.' The words, sir, struck upon my spirit like the tolling of a bell. But for heaven's sake let us not despair!"

"Life is precarious, Dr Hansombody; as your profession, if any, should teach. We are here to-day; we are gone—in the more sudden cases—to-morrow. What do you say, sir, to a glass of wine at the Angel? To my thinking, we should both be the better for it."

CHAPTER XVIII

APOTHEOSIS

AT this point my pen falters. The order of events would require us now to travel back to Troy with Miss Marty and the Doctor and break the news to the town. But have you the heart for it ? Not I.

I tell you that I never now pass the ferry slip on the shore facing Troy, on a summer's evening when the sun slants over the hill and the smoke of the town rises through shadow into the bright air through which the rooks are winging homeward—I never rest on my oars to watch the horse-boat unmooring, the women up the street filling their pitchers at the water-shute, the strawberry-gatherers at work in their cliff gardens ; but I see again Boutigo's van descend the hill and two passengers in black alight from it upon the shore—Miss Marty and the Doctor, charged with their terrible message. I see them stand on the slip and shade their eyes as they look across to the town glassed in the evening tide, I see beneath the shade of her palm Miss Marty's lips tremble with the words that are to shatter that happy picture of repose, brutally, violently, as a stone crashing into a mirror. In the ferry-boat she

trembles from head to foot, between fear and a fever to speak and have it over. . . .

But the town would not believe. Nay, even when Town Crier Bonaday, dropping tears into his paste-pot, affixed the placard to the door of the Town Hall, the town would not believe. Men and women gathered at his back, read the words stupidly, looked into each other's faces and shook their heads. Two or three gazed skyward.

"The Major gone? No, no . . . there must be some mistake. He would come back—to-morrow, perhaps—and bring light and laughter back with him. It was long since the town had enjoyed a good laugh, and here were all the makings of a rare one."

But the days passed and brought no tidings.

Miss Marty had drawn down the blinds in the Major's house, in token of mourning and to shut out prying eyes: for during the first day or two small crowds had collected in front and hung about the garden gate to stare pathetically up at the windows. They meant no harm: always when Cai Tamblyn or Scipio stepped out to remonstrate, they moved away quietly.

They were stunned. They could not believe.

On the third day the Town Council met and elected Dr Hansombody Deputy-Mayor, "During the temporary absence of one whose permanent loss this Council for the present declines to contemplate." That same evening the Doctor called a public meeting, and in a careful speech, interrupted here and there by emotion, told the burgesses all there was to

tell. "My friends," he concluded, "With a sad and sorry heart I lay these few facts, these poor shreds of evidence, before you. Oppressed as I am by the shadow of calamity, I refuse to consider it as more than a shadow, soon under Providence to be lifted from us. You, the witnesses of our daily intimacy, will understand with what emotion I take up the sceptre which has fallen from my friend's hand, with what diffidence I shall wield it, with what impatience I shall expect the hour which restores it to his strong grasp. In the words of Shakespeare "—here the Doctor consulted his note-book— "he was indeed a man,

> "'take him for all in all
> We shall not look upon his like again.'

Of my own instance, ladies and gentlemen, I made bold to bid fifty pounds for his recovery, feeling confident that Troy would endorse the offer. Nor did I mistake. This morning the Corporation by unanimous vote has guaranteed the sum. I have now the melancholy privilege of proposing from this chair that a house-to-house canvass be made throughout the town with the object of doubling this guarantee." (Murmurs of approval from all parts of the hall.)

The Vicar seconded. He would remind his audience that in the thirteenth century Richard, Earl of Cornwall, afterwards King of the Romans, had the misfortune to fall into the hands of the Saracens who held him at ransom: and that by the promptness with which the Cornishmen of those

days, rich and poor together, made voluntary contribution and discharged the price, they earned their coat-of-arms of fifteen gold coins upon a sable ground, as well as their proud motto "One and All." It had been said, and in his hearing, that the days of chivalry were past. Here was an opportunity to disprove it and declare that the spirit of their ancestors survived and animated the Cornishmen of to-day. (A Voice—"How about the Millennium?") He would pass over that interruption with the contempt it deserved. They were not met to bandy personalities, but as citizens united in the face of calamity by affection for their common borough. As stars upon the night, as the gold coins on their Duchy's sable shield, so might their free-will offerings spell hope upon the dark ground of present desolation. He, for his part, was ready to subscribe one guinea—yes, and more if necessary.

Although the Chairman had deprecated cheering, the audience broke into loud applause as the Vicar resumed his seat. The town had taken fire. Resolving itself into Committee, the meeting then and there nominated fifty collectors, all volunteers. Nor did the movement end here. Under the leadership of Miss Pescod the ladies of Troy devoted each a favourite article of personal adornment to be coined at need into money for the Major's redemption. (I myself possess a brooch which, left by my great-grandmother to her daughter upon this condition, to this day is known in the family as the Major's Cameo.) In six days the guarantee fund ran up to eleven hundred pounds, of which at least one third

might be accounted good money. In Troy we allow, by habit, some margin for enthusiasm.

A new placard was issued at once, and the reward increased to one hundred and fifty pounds.

For ten days this handsome offer evoked no more response than the previous one. For ten days yet all trace of the Major vanished at the edge of Mr Basket's fish-pond.

"It would almost seem," said Miss Sally Tregentil, discussing the mystery for the hundredth time with Miss Pescod, "as if from that fatal brink he had soared into the regions of the unknown and scaled, as the expression goes, the empyrean."

"If that's the case," remarked Miss Pescod practically, "twice the money won't bring him back."

On the 2nd of July the Chief Constable wrote to Dr Hansombody that he had discovered a clue. A doorkeeper of the Theatre Royal reported (and was corroborated by the man in charge of the ticket-office) that on the night of May 2nd, at about 10.30, a rough-looking fellow had presented himself, dripping-wet at the doors and demanded, in a state of agitation, apparently the result of drink, to see Mr Basket, who occupied a reserved seat in the house; further, that falling in with two sailors, who bought a ticket for him, the man had mounted the gallery stairs in their company, and this was the last seen of him by either of the deponents.

The Doctor posted to Plymouth, carrying with him the only extant portrait of the Major—a miniature

taken at the age of twenty-five ; called on Mr Basket, haled him off to the Chief Constable's office, and there by appointment examined the two witnesses. The men stuck to their story, but swore positively that the fellow they had seen bore no resemblance to the portrait.

" If you ask *me*," added the doorkeeper with conviction, " he was a dam sight more likely to have been his murderer. He looked it, anyhow."

The Doctor and Mr Basket returned to the latter's house in deeper perplexity than ever.

" The evidence," began Mr Basket, lighting his pipe after dinner, " vague as it is, points more decidedly than before to foul play. We have been assuming that our poor friend, whether by accident or design, found himself in my fish-pond."

" He would hardly have walked into it on purpose," said the Doctor.

" It is at least highly improbable. Well, here we have another man who comes running to the theatre wet through—also, we will assume, from an immersion in the fish-pond. We will suppose that he plunged into it to the rescue and having brought his burden safe to shore, ran to the theatre to inform me of the accident. At once we are confronted with half a dozen serious difficulties. To begin with, why, having asked for me, did he disappear ? "

" Press-gang," the Doctor suggested.

" Granted. But why, having an urgent message to deliver, did he proceed to take a ticket for the gallery in company with two sailors, apparently strangers to him ? Again, this explanation does not

even touch the crucial question, which is—How came our friend to disappear ? "

The Doctor shook his head.

" On the other hand," Mr Basket continued, " if we take the darker view, that this man had entered the fish-pond not for purposes of rescue, but—dreadful thought—to hold the victim under water, why should he have exposed himself to detection by coming to the theatre ? Why, in fine, should he desire to communicate at all with me ? "

" Perhaps," suggested Mrs Basket, who had been listening while she knitted, " his conscience pricked him."

" My dear Maria ! " began her husband testily. But at this moment the house rang with an alarm upon the front door bell.

The poor lady stood up fluttering, white in the face.

" You must answer it, Elihu ! I couldn't, not if you was to offer me twice the reward at this moment —and him standing there, perhaps, or his ghost, like Peter out of prison ! "

But their visitor proved to be the Chief Constable himself. He, too, was pale with excitement, and he held in his hand a copy of the Sherborne *Mercury*.

" Your friend—" he began.

" Well ? "

" He is dead. The mystery is not, indeed, explained, but the issue of it appears too certain. I was walking along old Town Street when the Sherborne Rider came along. He gave me my copy,

and see here!"—The Chief Constable spread the paper under the lamp and pointed to this paragraph—

> "*Operations off Boulogne.* By advices received from Admiral Lord Keith, the first experiment made with the new engines of destruction (of which so much was hoped) against the vessels moored off Boulogne pier, has not resulted in an unqualified success. On the 15th ult. one of these catamarans, as they are called, was launched against the foe from the *Vesuvius* bomb. The machinery had been set in motion, and the bomb's boat, having towed it into range, was preparing to return to the ship, when a shot from the shore batteries, falling close, precipitated our gallant fellows into the water. We are happy to add that they were all picked up by the boats of the squadron with the exception of one seaman, recently shipped at Plymouth. His name is given as Hymen; and the Captain of the *Vesuvius* reports that he joined as a volunteer.
>
> "We need hardly remind our readers that the name of Hymen has figured prominently for a fortnight past in our advertisement columns. If this gallant but unfortunate man should prove to be none other than Solomon Hymen, Esquire, Chief Magistrate of Troy, Cornwall, whose recent mysterious disappearance has cast a gloom over the small borough, we commiserate our friends in the West while envying them this exemplar of

an unselfish patriotism. *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.*"

Troy required no further evidence. To those of us indeed who had known the man—who, to borrow the words of a later poet, had lived in his mild and magnificent eye—the news carried its own verification. Precisely how—in what circumstances—he had volunteered, we might never elucidate : but the act itself, when we came to consider it, was of a piece with his character. He had left us in chagrin, betrayed by our unworthiness, nursing a wound deeper than any personal spite. Summarily, by a stroke, in the simplicity of his greatness, he had at once rebuked us and restored our pride. Perishing, he had left us an imperishable boast ; an example to which, though our own conscience might accuse us, we could point, and saying " This was a Son of Troy," silence detraction for ever.

Need I add that we made the most of it ?

. . . . . .

Mayor-choosing Day came round, and Dr Hansombody, elected by the unanimous vote of his fellow-councillors, attained to one of the twin summits of his ambition and was indued as Chief Magistrate with robe and chain. Six weeks later the town heard, at first incredulously, that he and Miss Marty were betrothed. The nuptials, it was announced, would be celebrated next June, on the decent expiry of a year of mourning.

Miss Sally Tregentil, on hearing the news, opined the Doctor's conduct to be quixotic — a

self-immolation, almost, upon the altar of friendship.

Miss Pescod, for her part, believed that he was after the woman's money. This unworthy suspicion the Doctor was fortunately able to rebut, and in the most public manner. After the wedding (a quiet one) he and his bride spent a short honeymoon at Sidmouth and returned but to announce their departure on a more distant journey. The Major's death being by this time, in legal phrase, "presumed," the Court of Canterbury had allowed Miss Marty to take out letters of administration. It behoved her now to travel up to London, interview proctors, and prove the will, executed (as the reader will remember) on the eve of that fatal First of May and confided to Lawyer Chinn's keeping. The town having subscribed for and purchased a pair of silver candelabra as a home-coming gift, the Mayor and Mayoress had no sooner returned and been welcomed with firing off cannon and pealing of bells than a day was fixed and a public meeting called for the presentation—a ceremony performed by the Vicar in brief but felicitous terms. The Doctor made a suitable speech of acknowledgment, and then, after waiting until the applause had subsided, lifted a hand.

"My friends," he said, "before we disperse I am charged to tell you that my wife and I contemplate another journey, and almost immediately. You may think how sad that errand is for us when I tell you that we go to prove the late Major Hymen's will. But I dare to hope you will understand that our feelings are not wholly tinged with gloom when you

hear the provisions of that document, which I will now ask my friend Mr Chinn to read aloud to you."

And this is the substance of what Lawyer Chinn read :—

"To his kinswoman Miss Martha Hymen, the Major left a life interest in the sum of five thousand pounds, invested in Government stock.

To his faithful servant Scipio Johnston the sum of one hundred and fifty pounds.

To his servant Caius Tamblyn, fifty pounds.

To each member of the Corporation of the Borough of Troy holding office at the time of his death, five pounds to buy a mourning ring.

To the Town Clerk the same, and to Mr Jago, Town Constable, the same.

To the Honourable and Gallant Corps of the Troy Volunteer Artillery, nineteen guineas, to purchase two standards, to be borne by them on all occasions of ceremony.

To the Vicar and Churchwardens, two hundred pounds, the interest to be distributed annually among the poor of the Parish, on Easter Day.

To the Feoffees and Governors of the Free Grammar School, a like sum to be spent in renovating the building, and a further sum of one thousand pounds to be invested for the

maintenance, clothing and education of ten poor boys of the Borough.

To the Vicar and Dr Hansombody, his executors, fifty pounds apiece.

And lastly, the residue of his estate (some four thousand pounds), together with the five thousand pounds reverting on his kinswoman's death, to the Mayor and Corporation, to build and endow a Hospital for the relief of the sick ; the same to be known as the Hymen Hospital, ' in the hope that the name of one who left no heirs may yet be preserved a while by the continuity of human suffering.' "

At the conclusion of Lawyer Chinn's reading it is not too much to say that all his audience caught their breaths. They had known the Major to be a great man : but not till now—not perhaps until that last solemn sentence fell on their ears—had they understood his greatness.

I have heard that the silence which followed was broken by a sob. Certainly the meeting dispersed in choking silence.

At length Troy realised its loss.

From that moment the figure, hitherto remembered in the clear outlines of affection, begun to grow, loom, expand, in the mists of awe. It ceased to be familiar, having put on greatness. Men began to tell how, on that last fatal expedition, the Major had turned single-handed and held a whole squadron of Dragoons at bay.

In his garden, by the brink of the fish-pond, Mr

Basket reared a stone with the following inscription :—

ATTEND
O PASSER BY!
ON THIS
SPOT
AS NEARLY AS CAN BE ASCERTAINED
SOLOMON HYMEN, ESQUIRE
SEVEN TIMES MAYOR OF TROY
IN CORNWALL
RELINQUISHED HIS HONOURS
FOR HIS COUNTRY'S NEED
AND RESOLUTELY SACRIFICED
EASE, FRIENDSHIP, FAME
TO EMBARK HIS SOLE MANHOOD
IN HER DEFENCE
AMID THE SURROUNDING MEMORIALS
OF GREECE AND ROME
CHALLENGING
THE SEVEREST VIRTUES OF ANTIQUITY
WITH A BRITON'S RESOLUTION

CHAPTER XIX

THE RETURN

THERE lies before me a copy of *The Plymouth and Dock Telegraph*, dated Saturday, July 2nd, 1814, much tattered and broken along the creases into which my great-grandmother (the same that left us the Major's Cameo) folded it these many years ago, to be laid away for a memorial.

The advertisements need not detain us long. Two husbands will not be responsible for their wives' debts, and one of them alleges that his lady "has behaved herself improperly during my absence at sea." A solicitor will lend £1000 on good security. A medical man, yielding to the persuasions of numerous friends, will remain another fortnight in the town; and may be consulted as usual at Mr Kitt's, Grocer, King Street, Dock, every Tuesday and Saturday from ten to six. M. La Barre (whom I guess to have been a Royalist refugee) will reopen instruction for young ladies and gentlemen in the French language on the 12th inst. The tolls and profits of the Saltash and the Ashburton turnpikes will be bidden for by public auction. The schooner *Brothers* and the fast-sailing cutter *Gambier* are for sale, together with the model of a frigate, "about six feet two inches long, copper-

bottomed, and mounted with thirty-two guns." The Royal Auxiliary Mail will start from Congdon's Commercial Inn every afternoon at a quarter before five, reaching the Bell and Crown, Holborn, in thirty-six hours: passengers for London have a further choice of the "Devonshire" (running through Bristol) or the "Royal Clarence" (through Salisbury). Two rival light coaches compete for passengers to Portsmouth. The "Self-Defence," Plymouth to Falmouth, four insides, will keep the same time as His Majesty's Mail. The Unitarian Association advertises a meeting at which Dr Toulmin of Birmingham will preach. The Friends of the Abolition of the Slave Trade print a long manifesto. The Phœnix, Eagle, and Atlas Companies invite insurers. Sufferers from various disorders will find relief in Spilsbury's Patent Anti-scorbutic, Dr Bateman's Pectoral, and Wessel's Jesuit's Drops.

Turning to the news columns, we find the whole country aflame with joy at the restoration of Peace. Once again (it is ten years since we last saw him there) the Prince Regent is at Portsmouth, feasting, speech-making, dancing, reviewing the fleet and the troops. With him are the Emperor of Russia; the Emperor's sister, the Duchess of Oldenburg; the King of Prussia; the Royal Dukes of Clarence, York, Cambridge; the Duke of Wellington and Field-Marshal Blücher. We read that on first catching sight of Wellington the Prince Regent "seized his hand and appeared lost in sensibility for the moment." As for Blücher, a party of sailors, defying his escort of dragoons, boarded and "took possession of the

quarter-deck, or, in other words, the top of the carriage."

> "Some were capsized; but two of them swore to defend the brave, and, as the carriage drew on, to the delight of all the tars commenced reels *a la Saunders* on the top, all the way to Government House, where the General was received with open hands and hearts, amid a group of as brave warriors as ever graced a festive table or bled in defence of their country's wrongs (*sic*)."

At the subsequent Ball,—

> "The Duke did not dance: and the gallant Blücher was so overcome by the heat of the ball-room as to oblige him to retire for a short time. . . . The two gallant Generals rode from the Government House in the same carriage; and it was observed that the Emperor of Russia shook hands with the illustrious Wellington every time he was near him."

From Portsmouth next day the Duke posts up to Westminster, to be introduced by the Dukes of Richmond and Beaufort and take his seat in the Lords under his new patents of nobility. Simultaneously in the Commons, Lord Castlereagh moves a Vote of Thanks, which is carried by a unanimous House. For the rest, Imperial Parliament is mainly occupied with Lord Cochrane's case and the sorrows of Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, especially "the inadequacy of her income to support the ordinary dignities of her rank, and afford her those

consolations which the unfortunate state of her domestic feelings require." Mr Wilberforce delivers a most animated speech against the Slave Trade. It is rumoured that Princess Charlotte of Wales has definitely refused the hand of the Prince of Orange, and that the rejected lover has left London, full of grief, in his carriage-and-four.

In short, our Major has been lost to us for ten full years, and still the world goes on: nay, for the moment it is going on excitedly. The procession with which the officers and artificers of Plymouth Dockyard yesterday celebrated the establishment of Peace alone occupies five columns of the paper.

What, then, of Troy? Ah, my friends, never doubt that Troy did its part, and, what is more, was beforehand as usual!

REJOICINGS AT TROY

> "In consequence of the re-establishment of Peace, the inhabitants of Troy were at an early hour on *Monday*, June 13th, busily employed in decorating their houses with laurel, etc., and forming arches in the streets, variegated with flowers and emblematical representations; and thirty-eight well-formed arches soon graced the joyful town. . . ."

Thirty-eight arches! Consider it, you provincial towns of twice, thrice, ten times Troy's size, who erected a beggarly five or six on Queen Victoria's last Jubilee, and doubtless plumed yourselves on your exuberant loyalty!

". . . To regale the poor, a bullock, two sheep (each weighing a hundred pounds), eight hundred twopenny loaves, with a great quantity of beer and porter, the gift of Sir Felix Felix-Williams, were distributed in the Market House and Town Hall by the Mayor (Dr Hansombody) and gentlemen. Every individual appeared happy : indeed it was highly gratifying to see so many people with joy painted on their countenances showing forth the delight of their hearts. To crown the day, a number of respectable citizens drank tea with the Mayoress, after which they adjourned to the Town Hall and commenced dancing, which was kept up for a long time with great spirit and regularity.

"*Tuesday* morning was ushered in with ringing of bells, etc., and a great number of people assembled before the Ship Inn to dance, during which the ladies were engaged in ornamenting, with flowers, flags and emblems, two boats placed on wheel sledges drawn by the populace. In fitting them up with such taste and elegance, Miss P——d and Miss S. T——l were particularly active and deserve every praise. At three o'clock the Mayor and a respectable company sat down to an excellent dinner at the Ship Inn, the band playing many grand national tunes in an adjoining room. After the repast signals were given from the Town Quay for the Battery guns to fire, and they accordingly fired three royal salutes in compliment to the Allied Sovereigns. The boats before mentioned were

soon ready to start, the former filled by ladies with garlands and other emblems of Peace in their hands, and the latter with musicians ; but previous to their removal Lord Wellington and some Cossacks appeared on horseback in search of Bonaparte, who according to his late practice had taken flight. However, he was soon driven back and taken, being met by a miller, who jumped up behind him and, observing his dejected and mournful countenance, embraced him with all the seeming fondness of a parent, desiring him to rouse up his spirits, if possible, to preserve his life. The grand procession of boats now began by a slow but graceful movement of the first, in the bow of which was a dove with outspread wings, holding an olive branch in her mouth. The boats were followed by a great concourse of people through the streets, and on their return were met by many gentlemen with wine, etc. This day, like the preceding, ended with a merry dance in the Town Hall.

" *Wednesday's* rejoicings opened at noon with a dinner at the King of Prussia, attended by the survivors of the disbanded Troy Volunteer Artillery, attired in the uniforms of that ever-famous corps. The sight of the old regimentals evoked the tears of sensibility from more than one eye which had never flinched before the prospect of actual warfare. After the meal, at which many a veteran ' told his battles o'er again,' a number of toasts were proposed by the Mayor, including The Allied Sovereigns,' ' The

> Prince Regent,' ' The Duke of Wellington ' (with three times three), ' The Troy Gallants,' ' The Memory of their first beloved Commander, Major Hymen '—this last being drunk in silence. The company then dispersed, to resemble below the Town Quay, where the boats which had adorned Monday's festivities were again launched, this time upon their native element, and proceeded, amid the clanging of joy-bells from the church tower, to cross the harbour, on the farther shores of which a large and enthusiastic crowd awaited them. In the first boat were the musicians ; in the second a number of ladies and gentlemen in fancy costumes. A score of boats followed, filled with spectators ; and were welcomed, as they reached the shore, with loud expressions of joy. Lord Wellington was again mounted on horseback, with General Platoff and some Cossacks. Bonaparte and his followers were also mounted, and some skirmishes took place of so life-like a character as to evoke universal plaudits. . . ."

A wooden-legged man, who had been stumping it for many hours along the high road from Plymouth, paused on the knap of the hill, mopped his dusty brow, and gazed down upon the harbour, shading his eyes. He wore a short blue jacket with tattered white facings, a pair of white linen trousers patched at the knees, a round tarpaulin hat, a burst shoe upon his hale foot, and carried a japanned knapsack—all powdered with white dust of the road in which his

wooden leg had been prodding small round holes for mile after mile.

He had halted first as his ear caught the merry chime of bells from the opposite shore. Having mopped his brow, he moved forward and halted again by a granite cross and drinking-trough whence the road led steeply downhill between the first houses of the village. He was visibly agitated. His hand trembled on his stick: his face flushed hotly beneath its mask of dust and sweat, and upon the flush a cicatrix—the mark of a healed bullet-wound—showed up for the moment on his left cheek, white as if branded there.

The people were shouting below, cheering vociferously. Yes, and along the harbour every vessel, down to the smallest sailing-boat, was bedecked with bunting from bowsprit-end to taffrail. The bells rang on like mad. The bells. . . . He dropped the hand which had been shading his eyes, let dip his frayed cuff in the water of the fountain and, removing his hat, dabbed his bald head. This—had he known it—worsened the smears of dust. But he was not thinking of his appearance.

He was thinking—had been thinking all the way from Plymouth—only of the harbour at his feet, and the town beyond. His eyes rested on them again, after ten years. All the way his heart had promised him nothing but this. He had forgotten self; having in ten years, and painfully, learnt that lesson.

But the music of the bells, the distant sounds of cheering, recalled that forgotten self; or perhaps it leapt into assertiveness again unwittingly, by as-

sociation of ideas with the old familiar scene. He had left the people cheering. . . . Was it ten years ago? They were cheering still. . . .

The road within view was deserted. But from below the dip of the hill the cheers ascended, louder and louder yet, deepening in volume.

He had intended to walk down the hill—as he hoped, unrecognised—cross the ferry, and traverse the streets of Troy to his own front door; then, or later, to announce himself. A thousand times in his far prison in Briançon among the high Alps he had pictured it. He had discounted all possibilities of change. In ten years, to be sure, much may happen. . . .

But here below him lay the harbour and the town, save for these evidences of joy surprisingly unchanged.

Why were the church bells ringing; the people shouting? Could word have been carried to them? He could not conceive how the news had managed to outstrip him.

He had left the people cheering; they were cheering still. . . . Were these ten years, then, but a grotesque and hideous dream? He gazed down upon his wooden leg, stiffly protruding before him and pointing, as it were ironically, at the scene of which it shared no memories.

A moment later he lifted his head at the sound of hoofs galloping up the road towards him. Round the corner, on a shaggy yellow horse almost *ventre-a-terre*, came a little man in a cocked hat, who rose in his stirrups drunkenly and blew a kiss to a dozen armed pursuers pounding at his heels.

Between wonder and alarm, the Major (you have guessed it was he) sprang up from his seat by the fountain. Fatal movement! At the sudden apparition the yellow horse shied violently, swerving more than half-way across the road; and its rider, looking backwards and taken at unawares, was shot out of his stirrups and flung shoulders-over-head in the dust, where he rolled sideways and lay still. His pursuers reined up with loud outcries of dismay. The Major advanced to the body, knelt beside it and turned it over. The man was bleeding from a cut in the head; but this and a slight concussion of the brain appeared to be the extent of his injuries. His neckcloth being loosened, he groaned heavily. The Major looked up.

"A nasty shock! For the moment I was half afraid—"

The words died away on his lips. One or two of the riders had alighted and all stood, or sat their horses, around him in a ring. He knew their faces, their names; yes, one and all he knew them; and they wore the uniform of the Troy Volunteer Artillery!

With a tightly beating heart he waited for their recognition. . . . No sign of recognition came. They eyed him curiously. It seemed to them that he spoke with something of a foreign accent. To be sure he articulated oddly—owing to his wound, of which his cheek bore the visible scar.

He knew them all. Had they not, each one of them, aforetime saluted him their commander, raising their hand to the peaks of these very shakoes?

Had they not marched, doubled, halted, presented arms, stood at attention, all as he bade them? He recognised the victim of the accident, too—a little tailor, Tadd by name, who in old days had borne a reputation for hard drinking.

"I reckon they must ha' stationed you here for a relay," suggested Gunner Sobey (ever the readiest man, no matter in what company he found himself) after eyeing the Major for a while.

"I beg your pardon?"

"I beg *yours*. Seemin' to me I've seen your features before, somewhere, though I can't call up your name." It is a point of honour with the men of Troy (I may here observe) to profess an ignorance of their less-favoured neighbours across the harbour. "I can't call up your name for the moment, dressed as you be—but 'twas thoughtful of 'em, knowing Tadd's habit, to post up a second figger for a relay. The man seems to be shaken considerable," he went on. "'Twould be a cruelty, as you might say, to ask him to go on playin' Boney, with a wife and family dependent and his heart not in it."

"He certainly isn't fit to mount again, if that is what you mean," said the Major, and glanced up the road where one of the troop (Bugler Opie) had ridden in pursuit of the yellow horse and now reappeared leading back the captive by the bridle.

"That's just what I'm saying," agreed Gunner Sobey; "and you'll do very well if you change hats." He stooped and picked Tadd-Bonaparte's *tricorne* out of the dust and brushed it with the sleeve of his tunic. "Here, let's see how you look in it." He

flipped off the Major's tarpaulin hat, clapped on the substitute, and fell back admiringly. "The Ogre to the life," he exclaimed; "and *with* a wooden leg! Hurroo, boys!"

Before the Major could expostulate a dozen hands had lifted him into the saddle astride the yellow horse.

"But—but I don't know in the least, my friends, what you intend! I cannot ride; indeed I cannot!"

"*With* a wooden leg! The idea!" answered Gunner Sobey, cheerfully. "Never you mind, but catch hold o' the pommel. We'll see to the rest."

The riders closed in and walked him forward down the hill, Gunner Sobey pressing close and supporting him, holding his wooden leg tight against the saddle-flap. The Major cast a wild look about him and saw Bugler Opie and another Gallant (Gunner Warboys—he knew all their names) lifting the half-unconscious Tadd and bearing him towards the fountain, to revive him. What was happening? Should he declare himself, here and now?

The company broke into cheers as they set their horses in motion. Had they indeed recognised him? The procession was assuredly a triumph, of some sort or another. But what did they intend?

From across the harbour the bells of Troy were ringing madly.

The Major shut his teeth. If this were indeed the town's fashion of welcoming him, well and good! If it were a mistake—a practical joke (but why should it be either?) he had not long to wait for his revenge. . . .

Let *The Plymouth and Dock Telegraph* narrate, in its own succinct language, what followed :—

> " The Corsican tyrant coming to grief in an attempt to elude the righteous wrath of his pursuers, another impersonator was speedily found, with the additional touch of a wooden leg, which was generally voted to be artistic. This new Boney on being conveyed down to the water's edge was driven into a boat, his countenance eliciting laughter by its almost comic display of the remorse of fallen ambition. A pair of his *soi-disant* supporters leapt in and affected to aid his escape, and were followed by pursuing boats in every direction, which had a most pleasing effect. At length, being hemmed in and made captive, he was taken to an island near the shore, supported by two officers of the Troy Volunteers, who affixed a board over him, upon which was printed, in large letters, 'ELBA.' We regret to say that in his vivacious efforts to reproduce the feelings of the fallen tyrant, the impersonator—who by latest accounts is a seaman recently paid off and impressed, almost at a moment's notice, for the *rôle* he sustained with such impromptu spirit—slipped on the wet seaweed and sustained a somewhat serious injury of the hip. Being with all expedition rescued, he was conveyed ashore to the Infirmary, which, founded by the late Major Hymen as a War Hospital, henceforward will open its doors to those diseases and casualties from which even Peace

cannot exempt our poor humanity. By latest advices the invalid is well on his way to recovery. In the evening there was a grand display of fireworks on the Town Quay, conducted by the Magistrates, to whom every praise is due for their efforts to promote conviviality and order."

CHAPTER XX

IN WHICH THE MAJOR LEARNS THAT NO MAN IS NECESSARY

FOR six days Troy continued to rejoice, winding up each day with a dance. We will content ourselves, however, with one last extract from *The Plymouth and Dock Telegraph*:—

> "At noon on Thursday the town assembled again and escorted its Mayor and Mayoress to the Hymen Hospital, where, in the presence of a distinguished company, Mrs Hansombody (*née* Miss Martha Hymen) unveiled a bust of her gallant kinsman, whose premature heroic death Troy has never ceased to lament. Sir Felix Felix-Williams made eulogistic reference to the departed hero, remarking on the number of instances by which the late war had confirmed the truth of the Roman poet's observation that it is pleasant and seemly to die for one's country. The Mayor responded on behalf of his amiable lady, whom Sir Felix's tribute had visibly affected. The sculpture was pronounced to be a lifelike image of the deceased, reflecting great credit on the artist, Mr Tipping, R.A. The

pedestal, five feet in height, is of polished black Luxulyan granite, and bears name and date with the words 'Take Him for All in All We shall not Look upon his Like again.' The bust, executed in plaster of Paris, will be replaced by marble when funds allow. The crowd dispersed in silence after the ceremony. Dancing in the street followed at 6 p.m., and was kept up with spirit for some hours, during which a large quantity of beer was given away."

The Major lay in the next room—the casualty ward—and stared up at the whitewashed ceiling.

His whole being ached as though, mind and body, he had been set upon and beaten senseless with bladders. And this was the second time! Yes—good heavens, how had he deserved it?—the second time! He remembered, after the disaster off Boulogne—many days after—awaking to consciousness in his prison bed in the fortress of Givet. Then, as now, he had lain staring, his whole soul sickened by the cruel jar of the jest. Hand of fate, was it? Nay, a jocose and blundering finger, rather, that had flipped him, as a man might flip a beetle, into the night. Then, as now, his soul had welled up in sullen indignation. He blamed no one; in all the stupid chapter of accidents there was no one to blame. But when the Protestant chaplain in Givet came to his bed he turned his face to the wall.

He refused to give his name. He did not understand this blind malevolence of fate, but he would make no terms with it. He—Solomon Hymen—

had a will of his own and a proper pride. If the world chose to use him so, after all his services to mankind, let it go and be damned to it. I tell you, the man had courage.

If his friends at home valued him, let them seek him out. He had given them cause enough for gratitude. If not, he asked nothing of them. In the prison he gave his name as Mr Solomon.

Yet he had made two attempts to escape. In the first he ran away with two comrades as far as Mézières. Being pursued by the *gens-d'armes* there, and called upon to surrender, his companions had given themselves up. Not so our hero; nor was he secured until he lay unconscious with a bullet-hole in the cheek. It was this which ever afterwards affected his speech, the bullet having cut or partially paralysed some string of the tongue.

It had been touch-and-go with him; but he recovered, and, passing henceforward as a desperate character, was drafted south with a dozen other desperate characters to the gloomy fortress of Briançon. There, in a second attempt for liberty, a fall from the ramparts had cost him his leg.

But worse than all his incarceration had been the final tramp through France—right away north to Valenciennes; then left-about-turn, three hundred and fifty miles to Tours; then south-east to Riou; and from Riou south-west to Bordeaux, where the transport took him off—one of six transports for about fifteen hundred released prisoners. All the way, too, on a wooden leg! Heaven knows how bitterly he had come to hate that leg.

Yet his heart, hardened though it was by all this long adversity, had melted as the *Romney* transport beat up closer and closer for England, and at sight of Plymouth heights he had broken into tears.

Troy! Troy! After all, Troy would remember him. Though he knew it brought him nearer to freedom, all that marching through France had been a weariness eating into his soul. Now a free man, along the road from Plymouth to Troy he had almost skipped.

And this had been his home-coming!

They remembered him. Beyond all his hopes they remembered him. In their memory he had grown into a Homeric man, a demi-god. He had only to declare himself. . . .

The Major lay on his hospital bed and stared at the ceiling. It was all very well, but ten years had made a difference—a mighty difference; a difference which beat all his calculations. It was a double difference, too; for all the while that he had been shrinking in self-knowledge, his reputation at home had been expanding like a cucumber.

Good Lord! How could he live up to it now? To obey his impulses and declare himself was simple enough, perhaps; but afterwards—

. . . . . .

He had nearly betrayed himself when Cai Tamblyn—in a queer straight-cut frock-coat of livery, blue with brass buttons, but otherwise looking much the same as ever—thrust his head in at the door.

In the first shock of astonishment the Major had almost cried out on him by name.

"Why—eh?—what are *you* doing here?" he stammered. Hitherto he had been waited on by a strange doctor (Hansombody's new partner) and a nurse whom he had assisted twelve years ago, when she was left a widow, to set up as a midwife.

"Might ask the same question of you," said Cai Tamblyn. "I'm the kew-rater, havin' been Hymen's servant in the old days, and shows around the visitors, besides dustin' the mementoes—locks of his bloomin' 'air and the rest of the trash. I looked in to see how you was a-gettin' on after the palaver. If I'm not wanted I'll go."

"Don't go."

"Very well, then, I won't." Mr Tamblyn took a seat on the edge of an unoccupied bed, drew from his pocket a knife and a screw of pig-tail tobacco, sliced off a portion and rubbed it meditatively between his hands. "I done you a good turn just now," he continued. "Some o' the company—the womenkind especially—wanted to come in and make a fuss over you before leavin'."

"Why should they want to make a fuss over me?"

"Well you may ask," said Mr Tamblyn, candidly. "'Tain't a question of looks, though. There's a kind of female—an' 'tis the commonest kind, too—can't hear of a man bein' hurt an' put to bed but she wants to see for herself. 'Tis like the game a female child plays with a dollies' house. Here they've got a nice little orspital to amuse 'em, with nice clean blankets an' sheets, an' texteses 'pon the walls, an' a cupboard full o' real medecines an' splints, and

along comes a real live patient to be put to bed, an' the thing's complete. Hows'ever, they didn' get no fun out of 'ee to-day, for I told 'em you was sleepin' peaceful an' not to be disturbed."

"Thank you." Under pretence of settling down more comfortably against the pillow, the Major turned his head aside. "Then it seems you knew this—this—"

"Hymen? Knew him intimate."

"What—what sort of man was he?"

Cai Tamblyn transferred the shreds of tobacco to a pouch made of pig's bladder, pocketed it, and rubbed his two palms together, chuckling softly.

"Look here, I'll show you the bust of en if you like; that is"—he checked himself and added dubiously — "if you're sure it won't excite you."

"Excite me?"

"Sure it won't give you a relapse or something o' the sort? The woman Snell has stepped down to the Mayor's to wash up after the light refreshments, and I'm in charge. Prettily she'll blow me up if she comes back an' finds I've been an' gone an' excited you." He cleared a space on the wash-stand. "I've no business to be in here at all, really, talkin' wi' the pashent; but damme, you can't think what 'tis like, sittin' by yourself in a museum. I wish sometimes they'd take an' stuff me!"

He hobbled out and returned grunting under the weight of the bust, which he set down upon the wash-stand, turning it so that the Major might have a full view of its features.

"There!" he exclaimed, drawing back and panting a little.

"Good heavens!" The Major drew the bedclothes hurriedly up to his chin. "Was he—was he like *that?*"

"I thank the Lord he was not," Mr Tamblyn answered, slowly and piously. "Leavin' out the question o' colour and the material, which is plaster pallis and terrible crips, and the shortage, which is no more than the head an' henge of 'em, so to speak, 'tis no more like the man than *you* be. And I say again that I thank the Lord for it. For to have the old feller stuck up in the corner an' glazin' at me nat'rel as life every time I turned my head would be more than nerves could stand."

"You wouldn't wish him back, then, in the flesh?"

Cai Tamblyn turned around smartly and gazed at the patient, whose face, however, rested in shadow.

"Look 'ee here. You've a-been in a French war prison, I hear, but that's no excuse for talkin' irreligious. The man was blowed to pieces, I tell you, by a thing called a catamaran, off the coast o' France; not so much left of en as would cover a half-crown piece. And you ask me if I want en back in the flesh!"

"But suppose that should turn out to be a mistake?" muttered the Major.

"Hey?" Cai Tamblyn gave a start. "Oh, I see; you're just puttin' it so for the sake of argyment. "Well, then,"—the old man turned his quid deliberately—"did you ever hear tell what old

Sammy Mennear said when his wife died an' left him a widowman ? ' I wouldn' ha' lost my dear Sarah for a hundred pound,' said he ; ' an' I dunno as I'd have her back for five hundred.' That's about the size o't with Hymen, I reckon—though, mind you, I bear en no grudge. He left me fifty pound by will, and a hundred an' fifty to a heathen nigger ; and how that can be reconciled with Christian principle I leave you to answer. But I bear en no grudge."

" What ? They proved his will ? " The Major stared at his portrait and shivered.

" *In* course they did. The man was blowed to pieces, I tell you. 'Tis written up on the pedestal. ' Take en for all in all '—or piece by piece, they might ha' said, for that matter—' we shall not look upon his like agen.' No, nor they don't want to, for all their speechifyin'. I ain't what the parson calls a *pessimist ;* I thinks poorly o' most things, that's all ; *and* folks ; and I say they don't want to. Why, one way and another, he left close on twelve thousand pound ! "

The Major drew the bed-clothes maybe an inch further over his chin and so lay still, answering nothing, his eyes fastened on the bust. Beneath its hyacinthine curls it beamed on him with a fixed benevolent smile.

" Not that Hymen hadn't decent qualities, mind you," Cai Tamblyn continued. " The fellow was plucky, and well-meanin', too, in his way ; and a better master you wouldn't find in a day's march. What he suffered from was wind in his stomach. With all the women settin' their caps at him he

couldn't help it : but so 'twas. And the men were a'most as bad. Just you hearken to this—"

Cai seated himself on the edge of the bed again, felt in his breast-pocket and drew out a spectacle-case and a folded pocket-book ; adjusted the spectacles on his nose, slapped the pocket-book viciously, spread it on his knee, cleared his throat, and began to read,—

" ' As a boy he was studious in his habits, shy in company, unflinchingly truthful, and fond of animals. For obvious reasons these pets of his childhood are unrepresented among the memorials so piously preserved in the Hymen Museum ; but through the kindness of our esteemed townswoman, Mrs (or, as she is commonly called, " Mother ") Hancock, aged ninety-one, we are able to include in our collection a marble of the kind known as " glass-alley," with which she avers that, at the age of ten or thereabouts, our future hero disported himself. It must have been by some premonition that the venerable lady cherished it, having received it originally, as she remembers, in barter for a pennyworth of saffron cake, a species of delicacy to which the youthful Solomon was pardonably addicted. . . .'

" I got to show that damned glass-alley," interjected Mr Tamblyn. " Why ? Because a man past work can't stay his belly on the interest o' fifty pound. Oh, but there's more about it,—

" ' The cobble-stones with which the streets of Troy are paved do not lend themselves readily to expertness in shooting with marbles. But the subject of this memoir was ever one who, adapting himself

to difficulties, rose superior to them. The glass material of which the relic is composed shows numerous minute indentations in its spherical outline, eloquent testimony to the character which had already begun to learn the lesson of greatness and by perseverance to bend circumstances to its will. In the case containing this relic, and beside it, reposes a horn-book, used for many generations in the Troy Infant School, conducted A.D. 1739-1782 by Miss Sleeman, schoolmistress. Although we have no positive evidence, there is every reason to believe that the youthful Solomon—'

"Ain't it enough to make a man sick?" demanded Cai Tamblyn, looking up. "And I got to speak this truck, day in an' day out."

"Who wrote it?"

"Hansombody. Oh, I ain't denyin' he was well paid. But when I see'd Miss Marty this very afternoon, unwrappin' the bust with tears in her eyes, an' her husband standin' by as modest as Moll at a christenin', and him the richer by thousands—"

"WHAT?"

The Major, despite his hurt, had risen on his elbow. Cai Tamblyn, too, bounced up.

"The Mayor, I'm talkin' of—Dr Hansombody," he stammered, gazing into the invalid's face in dismay.

So, for ten slow seconds or so, they eyed one another. Speech began to work in Cai Tamblyn's throat, but none came. He cast one bewildered, incredulous, horror-stricken glance back from the face on the bed to the fatuously smiling face on the

washhand stand, and with that — for the Major had picked up his pillow and was poising to hurl it—flung his person between them, cast both arms about the bust, lifted it, and tottered from the room.

CHAPTER XXI

FACES IN WATER

"EH? Wants to get up, does he?"

Dr Hansombody during the last year or two had gradually withdrawn himself from professional cares, relinquishing them to his young and energetic assistant, Mr Olver. Magisterial and other public business claimed more and more of the time he more and more grudgingly spared from domestic felicity and the business of rearranging his entomological cabinet. He had found himself, early in his third term of mayoral office, the father of a bouncing boy. A silver cradle, the gift of the borough, decorated his sideboard. As for the moths and butterflies, he designed to bequeath them, under the title of "The Hansombody Collection," to the town. They would find a last resting-place in the Hymen Museum, and so his name would go down to posterity linked with that of his distinguished friend. This was the first visit he had paid to the stranger's bedside; and even now he had only stepped in, at his assistant's request, from the next room, where for half an hour he had been engaged with Cai Tamblyn in choosing a position for the first case of butterflies.

"Wants to get up, does he?" asked the Doctor absently, after a perfunctory look at the patient. "Restless, eh?" He still carried in his hand the two-foot rule with which he had been taking measurements. "You've tried a change of diet?"

"I fancy," Mr Olver suggested, "he is worried by the number of visitors—ladies especially."

"Georgiana Pescod has been worrying?"

The patient lifted his right hand from the bed and spread out all its fingers; lifted his left, and spread out three more.

"What? Eight visits?"

"And that's not the worst of it," put in the Nurse, Mrs Snell, sympathetically, smoothing the coverlet. "First and last there's been forty-two in these six days. It can't be for his looks, as I tell en; and his name bein' Solomon won't account for the whole of it."

"I sometimes think," said the Doctor pensively and with entire gravity, turning to his assistant, "we shall have to diminish the numbers of the Visiting Committee. My dear friend Hymen planned it, in years gone by, on a war footing; and even so I remember suggesting to him at the time that the scale was somewhat—er—grandiose. But it was characteristic of him, and we have clung to it for that reason in a spirit perhaps *too* piously conservative. Forty-two ladies! My good fellow"—he turned to the patient—"I really think—if your leg is equal to it—a short stroll in the fresh air may be permitted. Pray do not think we desire to hurry your cure.

Even setting aside the dictates of charity, and our natural tenderness towards one who, as I understand, has bled for our common country, we owe you something "—the Major's fingers plucked nervously at the bed-clothes—" some reparation," the Doctor went on, " for the—er—character of your reception. In short, I hope, on your complete recovery, to find you some steady employment, such as too many of our returning heroes are at this moment seeking in vain. In the meanwhile our town has some lions which may amuse your convalescence—a figurative term, meaning objects of interest."

Once or twice, in the course of his first stroll, the Major's eyes came near to brimming with tears. The town itself had suffered surprisingly little change. The Collector—he seemed scarcely a day older—stood as of old at the head of the Custom House stairs, and surveyed the world benignly with his thumbs in the arm-holes of his waistcoat. Before the Major's own doorway the myrtles were in bloom, and a few China roses on the well-trimmed standards. By the Broad Ship as of old his nostrils caught the odours of tar and hemp with a whiff of smoke from a schooner's galley (the *Ranting Blade*, with her figure-head repainted, but otherwise much the same as ever). Miss Jex, the postmistress, still peered over her blind. She studied the Major's wooden leg with interest. He, on his part, seemed to detect that the down on her upper lip had sensibly lightened in colour. *En revanche*, from the corner of his eye, as he passed the open door, he saw that the portrait over the counter (supposed of yore to represent the

Prince Regent) wore a frame of black ribbon. The black, alas! was rusty.

The manners of the children had not improved. Half a dozen urchins, running into him here by the corner of the post-office on their way from school, fell back in a ring and began to call "Boney!" derisively. He escaped from them into the churchyard, and passing up between the graves, rested for a while, panting in the cool of the porch.

The door stood ajar. Pushing it open, he stepped within and paused again, half-terrified by the unfamiliar *tap-tap* of his wooden leg on the pavement. The sunshine lay in soft panels of light across the floor, and ran in sharper lines along the tops of the pews, worn to a polish by generations of hands that had opened and shut their doors. Aloft, where the rays filtered through the clerestory windows, their innumerable motes swam like gold-dust held in solution.

The Major found his own pew, dropped into the familiar seat, and strove to collect his thoughts. A week ago, on his way from Plymouth, it had seemed the easiest thing in the world to reveal himself and step back into his own. The only question had been how to select the most impressive moment.

His eyes, travelling along the wall on his right, encountered an unfamiliar monument among the many familiar ones; an oval slab of black marble enclosed in a gilt wreath and inscribed with gilt lettering. He leaned forward, peering closer, blinking against the sunlight that poured through the window.

SACRED
TO THE MEMORY OF
SOLOMON HYMEN, ESQUIRE
SEVEN TIMES MAYOR OF THIS BOROUGH
AND
MAJOR COMMANDING THE TROY VOLUNTEER ARTILLERY
UNFORTUNATELY AND UNTIMELY
SLAIN IN ACTION
OFF THE COAST OF FRANCE NEAR BOULOGNE
ON MAY 15TH, MDCCCIV.
THIS TABLET WAS ERECTED BY SUBSCRIPTION
AMONG HIS SORROWING FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS
OF THE BOROUGH HE, LIVING, ADORNED WITH HIS WISDOM
AND DYING, ENDOWED WITH HIS WEALTH
AS WITH HIS EXAMPLE.
FORTIBUS ET COELUM PATRIA.

He spelled out the inscription slowly, and, turning at the sound of a footstep in the porch, was aware of a tall figure in the doorway—his own faithful Scipio.

Least of all was Scipio changed. Ten years apparently had not even tarnished his livery. It shone in its accustomed scarlet and green and gold in the rays which, falling through the windows of the south aisle, lit up his white teeth and his habitual gentle grin.

"Mistah will be studyin' de board—berry fine board. Not so fine board in Cornwall, dey tell me."

The Major turned his face, avoiding recognition.

"No, not dat; dat's modern trash," went on Scipio, affably, following his gaze. "Good man, all same, Massa Hymen; lef' plenty money. One hundred fifty pound. Lef' Cai Tamblyn fifty. Every person say remarkable difference. But doan'

you look at *him ;* he's modern trash. Massa Hymen lef' me *one* hundred fifty pound. Dat all go to board up yonder, you see ; ' Scipio Johnson, Esquire, of this Parish ' in red letters an' gilt twirls. I doan' mind tellin' you. De hull parish an' Lawyer Chinn has it drafted—Vicar he promises me it shall go in—' Scipio Johnson, Esquire, *of* this Parish,' an' twiddles round de capital letters. Man, I served Mas' Hymen han' an' foot, wet an' dry, an' look like he las' anudder twenty year."

" You mean to say that I—that you, I mean—"

" Dat's so," put in Scipio, nodding cheerfully, while the stained glass windows flung flecks of red and blue on his honest ebony features. " An' Cai Tamblyn all de while no better'n a fool. ' *Him,*' he'd sneer, not playin' up, but pullin' his cross face. Dat's a lesson if ebber dere was one. Cai Tamblyn left with fifty, an' me with three time fifty. ' To my faithful servant, Scipio Johnson. . . .' And so Miss Marty, when it came to choose, took me on—Scipio Johnson, Esquire, of this Parish—and Cai Tamblyn no more than ' Mister,' nor ebber a hope of it."

. . . . . .

The Major found himself in the churchyard, staring at a headstone. He did not remember the stone, yet it seemed by no means a new one. Weather-stains ran down the lettering and lichen spotted it.

He read the name. It was the name of a man whom he had left hale and young—a promising corporal.

He made his way back slowly to the hospital, leaning heavily on his stick. Strange shrill noises

brought him to a halt on the threshold. They came from the back of the house.

At the sound of his wooden leg in the brick passage, Cai Tamblyn thrust his head out from the kitchen doorway.

"You come in," said he. "Please the Lord, the worst is over; but I had to tell her."

"Her?" echoed the Major in bewilderment. "Who?"

"Why, you see, fixed up as we were here—the woman with six empty beds to nurse, and me on t'other side with a roomful o' momentoes, an' no end to it but the grave—there seemed no way out but matterimony. What with my fifty an' her little savin's we might ha' managed it, too, comfertable enough. But when along comes you an' upsets the apple-cart, w'y, in justice, the woman had to be told. Which it took her like a slap in the wind, an' I'm surprised the way she'd set her heart on it. But never you mind; she's sensible enough when she comes round."

"Cai," said the Major, solemnly, "I thought we had agreed that no one was to be told?"

"So we did, sir," answered Mr Tamblyn, setting his jaw. "But, come to think it over, 'twasn't fair to the woman. Not bein' a married man yourself, sir, or as good as such—"

"Excuse me," said the Major, lifting a hand. "I quite well understand. But suppose that I have not come back after all!"

CHAPTER XXII

WINDS UP WITH A MERRY-GO-ROUND

TROY on a Regatta Day differs astonishingly from Troy on any other day in the year, and yet until you have seen us on a Regatta Day you have not seen Troy.

Once every August, on a Monday afternoon, the frenzy descends upon us ; and then for three days we dress our town in bunting and bang starting guns and finishing guns, and put on fancy dresses, and march in procession with Japanese lanterns, and dance, and stare at pyrotechnical displays. But the centre, the pivot, the axis of our revelry is always the merry-go-round on the Town Quay.

"The merry-go-round, the merry-go-round, the merry-go-round at Troy,
They whirl around, they gallop around, man, woman, and maid and boy!"

Yachtsmen, visitors, farmers and country wives, sober citizens and mothers of families, all meet centripetally and mount and are whirled to the mad strains of the barrel-organ under the flaming naphtha, around the revolving pillar where the mirrored images chase one another too quickly for thought to answer their reflections. We make no toil of our pleasure ; yet, if you will mark the distinction, it

keeps us hard at work, and reflection must wait until Thursday morning. Then we dismiss the yachts on their Channel race westward. We fire the last gun, pull down the blue Peter, and off they go. We draw a long breath, stow away our remaining blank cartridges, pocket the stop-watch, heap the recall numbers together, and, having redded up the jolly-boat, light our pipes and sit and gaze awhile after our retreating visitors. They go from us silent as great white moths ; but, silent themselves, they take, as they brought, all the noise and racket with them. Our revel is over ; behind us the harbour lies almost deserted, and we row back to our diurnal peace.

To be sure, in the days of which I write, there were no yachts to visit us. But three of his Majesty's training-brigs had arrived, bringing their gigs and long-boats, and sailing cutters, with the racing-shells in which the oarsmen of Dock were to do battle with our champions of Troy, and a couple of crews of the famous Saltash fishwomen who annually gave us an exhibition race for a purse of gold and in the evening danced quadrilles and country reels on the quarter-deck with His Majesty's officers.

The town, on its part, had made all due and zealous preparation ; and at eight o'clock in the morning, when the Major stepped out of the hospital for a look at the weather (which was hazy but warm, with promise of a cloudless noon), already the streets breathed festival. Sir Felix's coppices had been thinned as usual for the occasion, and scores of small saplings, larch and beech and hazel, lined the narrow

streets, their sharpened stems planted between the cobbles, their leafy tops braced back against the house-fronts and stayed with ropes which, leading through the upper windows, were made fast within to bars of grates, table-legs and bed-posts. Over them, from house to house, strings of flags waved in the light morning breeze, and over these again the air was jocund with the distant tunding of a drum and the voices of flute and clarionet calling men to mirth in the Town Square.

The Major gave a glance up and down the street and retired indoors to prepare his breakfast, for he was alone. Cai Tamblyn and the widow Snell had the day before departed—on their honeymoon.

To arrange that his honeymoon should take him from Troy on the day of all days to which every other soul in the town looked forward, was quite of a piece with Cai Tamblyn's sardonic humour. But he surely excelled himself when, the day before his marriage, he called on the Mayor and begged leave to appoint the patient in the hospital as his *locum tenens* for the week.

"The man's well enough to look after the place," he urged; "and you won't find him neglectin' it to go gaddin' round the shows. A wooden leg's a wonderful steadier at fair-times." And the Doctor assented.

It were too much to say that his appointment, when Cai Tamblyn reported it, touched our hero's sense of humour, for he had none; but he winced under the dreadful irony of it.

"Do you know what you're asking?" he cried.

"Suppose that visitors call—as they will. Would you have me show them round and point out my own relics?"

"Damme, and I thought I was givin' you a bit o' fun!" said Cai, scratching his head. "It can't be often a man finds hisself in your position; and in the old days when you got hold of a rarity you liked to make the most of it."

"Fun!" echoed the Major. "And you'd have me reel off all those reminiscences—all the sickening praise, yard by yard, out of that infernal hand-book!"

Cai Tamblyn eyed him gravely.

"You don't like that neither?" he asked.

"Like it!" the poor man echoed again, sank into a chair, and, shuddering, covered his face. "It makes my soul creep with shame."

Silence followed for a dozen long seconds.

"Master!"

The Major shuddered again, but looked up a moment later with tears in his eyes as Cai laid a hand kindly yet respectfully on his shoulder.

"Master, I ax your pardon." He stepped back and paused, seeming to swallow some words in his throat before he spoke again. "You're a long way more of a man than ever I gave 'ee credit to be. Twelve year I passed in your service, too; an' I take ye to witness that 'twas Cai Tamblyn an' not Scipio Johnson that knawed 'ee agen, for all the change in your faytures. Whereby you misjudged us, sir, when you left me fifty pound and that nigger a hundred an' fifty. Whereby I misjudged ye in turn, an' I ax your pardon."

"No, Cai; you judged me truly enough, if severely. There was a time when I'd have fed myself on those praises that now sicken me."

"An' you was happy in them days."

"Yes, happy enough."

"Would you have 'em back, master?"

"Would I have them back?" The Major straightened himself up and stood for a moment staring out of the window. "No, Cai," he said resolutely, squaring his chin; "not for worlds."

"There's one little bit of it, sir, you got to have back," said Cai; "an' that's my fifty pound."

"Nonsense, man. I sha'n't hear of it."

"I've a-talked it over wi' the woman, an' she's agreeable. She says 'tis the only right an' proper thing to be done."

"She may be as agreeable as—as you deserve, Cai; but I tell you I don't touch a penny of it. And you may have formed your own opinion of me during twelve years of service, but in all that time I don't think you ever knew me go back on my word."

"That's truth, sir," Cai admitted, scratching his head again; "and more by token, 'tis about the only thing the book has forgot to praise 'ee for."

"Perhaps," said the Major, in his bitterness almost achieving a witticism, "the author felt 'twould be out of place."

"But all this apart, sir, I don't see how you'll get along without money."

"Make your mind easy on that score, my friend.

I rather fancy that I'm provided for; but if that should prove to be a mistake, I may come to you for advice."

"Marryin'?" queried Cai. "But no; with a wooden leg—you'll excuse me—"

"Devil take the man! *You* can't argue that womenkind are squeamish."

Cai grinned. "You'll take on this little job, anyway, sir? I can't very well go to his Worship an' beg you off; it might set him suspectin'."

"I'll take the job," said the Major, hastily.

"Brayvo! But what I'd like to do"—Cai rubbed his chin reflectively—"is to get that cussed book written over agen, an' written different."

"Give it time," his master answered sadly. "Maybe even that is a job that will get itself done one of these days."

Cai and his bride had departed, and the Major faced the ordeal of Regatta Day with much trepidation. Heaven help him to play his part like a man!

But it appeared that the sightseers, who, as ever, began to pour into the town at nine in the morning and passed the door in one steady, continuous stream until long past noon-day, had either seen the Hymen Hospital before or were intent first on culling the more evanescent pleasures of the day. In fact, no visitor troubled him until one o'clock, when, in the lull between the starts of the sailing and the rowing races, and while the Regatta Committee lunched ashore to the strains of a brass band, a farm labourer in his Sunday best, crowned with a sugar-loaf hat, entered,

flung himself into a chair, and demanded to have a tooth extracted.

"You needn' mind which," he added encouragingly; "they all aches at times. Only don't let it be more than one, for I can't afford it. I been countin' up how to lay out my money, an' I got sixpence over; an' it can't be in beer, because I promised the missus."

The Major assured him that the extraction of a tooth or teeth did not fall within the sphere of the hospital's prevision.

"W'y not?" asked the countryman, and added coaxingly, "Just to pass the time, now!"

"Not even to pass the time," the Major answered with firmness.

"Very well," said the man resignedly. "If you won't, you won't; but let's while it away somehow. Give me a black draught."

At rare intervals from three o'clock till five other country folk dropped in, two or three (once even half a dozen) at a time. As a show the Hymen Hospital and Museum appeared to have outlived its vogue. The male visitors, one and all, removed their hats on entering, and spoke in constrained tones as if in church. To the Major's relief, no one asked him to recite from the book, and the questions put to him were of the simplest. A farm maiden from the country requested that the bust might be wound up.

"I beg your pardon?"

"You don't tell me there isn' no music inside!" the maiden exclaimed. "What's it *for*, then?"

With difficulty the Major explained the purpose

and also the limits of statuary. The girl turned to her swain with a *moue* of disgust.

"It's my belief," she reproached him, "you brought me here out of stinginess, pretending not to notice when we passed the waxworks, which is only tuppence, and real murderers with their chests a-rising an' fallin', as Maria's young man treated her to it last Regatta ; an' a Sleepin' Beauty with a clock-work song inside like distant angels."

But at five o'clock or thereabouts, arrived no less a personage than Sir Felix Felix-Williams himself, gallantly escorting a couple of ladies whom he had piloted through the various rustic sights of the fair.

"O—oof!" panted Sir Felix, gaining the cool passage and mopping his brow. "A veritable haven of rest after the dust and din! Hullo, my good man, are you the caretaker for the day? I don't seem to recollect your face. . . . Eh? No? Well, show us round, please. These ladies are curious to know something of our local hero."

The Major, his wooden leg trembling, opened the door of the Museum. The ladies put up their eye-glasses and gazed around, while Sir Felix dusted his coat.

"Hymen, his name was. That's his bust yonder," Sir Felix explained, flicking at his collar with his handkerchief. "A very decent body ; a retired linen-draper, if I remember, from somewhere in the City, where he put together quite a tidy sum of money. Came home and spent it in his native town, where for years he was quite a big-wig. But our friend here has a book about him, written up by the

apothecary of the place. "Isn't that so?" he appealed to the Major, who drew the document from his pocket with shaking fingers.

"Eh? I thought so," went on Sir Felix. "But spare us the long-winded passages, my friend. Just a few particulars to satisfy the ladies, who, on this their first visit to Cornwall, are good enough to be inquisitive *à folie* about us—about Troy especially."

"But it is ravishing—quite ravishing!" declared one of the ladies.

"A duck of a place!" cried the other, inspecting the bust. "And see, Sophronia, what a duck of a man! And you say he was only a linen-draper?" She turned to Sir Felix.

"But all the Cornish are gentlemen—didn't Queen Elizabeth or somebody say something of the sort?" chimed in the first. "And the place kept as neat as a pin, I protest!"

"Gentlemen in their own conceit, I fear," Sir Felix answered. "But this fellow was, on the whole, a very decent fellow. Success, or what passes for it in a small country town, never turned his head. He had a foible, I'm told, on the strength of a likeness (you'll be amused) to the Prince Regent. But, so far as I observed, he knew how to conduct himself towards his—er—superiors. I had quite a respect for him. Yes, begad, quite a respect."

"I think, sir," said the Major, controlling his voice, "since you ask me to select a passage, this may interest the ladies:

"'But perhaps the most remarkable trait in the subject of our memoir was his invariable magnan-

imity, which alone persuaded all who met him that they had to deal with no ordinary man. It is related of him that once in childhood, having been pecked in the leg by a gander, he was found weeping rather at the aggressive insolence of the fowl (with which he had good-naturedly endeavoured to make friends) than at the trivial hurt received by his own boyish calves.' "

The ladies laughed, and Sir Felix joined in uproariously.

"How deliciously quaint!" exclaimed the one her friend had addressed as Sophronia. "What rural detail!"

"The very word. Quaint — devilish quaint!" Sir Felix agreed. "We *are* devilish quaint in these parts."

The Major turned a page:

" 'So far as inquiry lifts the curtain over the closing scene, it was marked by a similar calm forgetfulness of self in the higher interests of his Sovereign, his Country, the British Race. If enemies he had, he forgave them. Attending only to his country's call for volunteers to defend her shores, he followed it in the least conspicuous manner, and fell; leaving at once an example and a reproach to those who, living at home in ease, enjoyed the protection of spirits better conscious of the destinies and duties of Englishmen.' "

"Gad, and so he did!" Sir Felix exclaimed. "I remember thinking something of the sort at the time and doubling my subscription." He yawned. "Shall we go, ladies?" he asked. "I assure you

there is no time to be lost if you wish to see the menagerie."

But when the ladies were in the passage, the Major half-closed the door, shutting Sir Felix off.

"May I have just one word with you, sir? I will not detain you more than a moment."

"Eh?" said Sir Felix, and pulled out a shilling. "Is that what you're after? Well, I'm glad you had the delicacy to let the ladies pass out first. They think us an unsophisticated folk."

The Major waved the coin aside. He planted himself on his wooden leg, with his back to the door, and faced the baronet.

"I just want to tell you," he said quietly, "that the whole of what I read was a lie."

"Naturally, my good fellow. One allows for that in those memoirs."

"The man, except in parable, was never bitten by a gander in his life," persisted the Major. "Nor did he enlist and fall—if he fell—through any magnanimous motive. He just left Troy on finding himself betrayed by a neighbour—a dirty, little, mean-spirited, pompous gander of a neighbour—and whatever example he may have unwittingly—yes, and unwillingly—set, the lesson does not appear to have been learnt—at least, until this moment. But," concluded the Major, throwing wide the door, "we keep the ladies waiting, Sir Felix."

Sir Felix, ordinarily the most irascible of men, gasped once and passed out, cowed, beaten, utterly and hopelessly bewildered. The Major stood by the

door with chest inflated as it had not been inflated for ten years and more.

Perhaps this inflation of the chest, reviving old recollections, prompted him to do what next he did. Otherwise I confess I cannot account for it. He stepped back from the door and looked around the room, emitting a long breath. Outside the window the dusk was already descending on the street. Within a glass-fronted cupboard in the corner, hung his old uniform, sword, epaulettes and cocked hat ; above the mantelpiece a looking-glass.

He stepped to the cupboard, opened it, and took down the time-rotten regimentals. Slowly, very slowly, he divested himself of his clothes, and, piece by piece, indued himself in the old finery.

At the breeches he paused ; then drew them on hastily over his wooden leg, and left them unbuttoned at the knees while he thrust his arms into coat and waistcoat. Prison fare had reduced his waist, and the garments hung limply about him. But the breeches were worst. Around his wooden leg the buttons would not meet at all. And what to do with the gaiter ?

Methodically he unstrapped the leg and regarded it. Heavens ! how for these three years past he had hated it ! He looked up. From the far side of the room the bust watched him, still with its fatuous smile.

He rose in a sudden access of passion, gripping the leg, taking aim. . . . A slight noise in the passage arrested him, and, leaning against the door-jamb, he peered out. It was the woman with the evening's

milk, and she had set down the jug in the passage.

He closed the door, swayed a moment, and with a spring off his sound leg, leapt on the still grinning bust and smote at it, crashing it into pieces.

. . . . . .

Mrs Tiddy, the milkwoman, ran home declaring that, in the act of delivering the usual two pennyworth at the hospital, she had seen the ghost of the Major himself, in full regimentals, in the act of assaulting his own statue ; which, sure enough, was found next morning scattered all over the floor.

. . . . . .

The crash of it recalled the Major to his senses. He stared down on the fragments at his feet. He had burnt his boats now.

As methodically as he had indued them he divested himself of his regimentals, and so, having slipped into his old clothes again and strapped on his leg, stumped resolutely forth into the street.

Cai Tamblyn, like every other Trojan, kept a boat of his own ; and on the eve of departing he had placed her at the Major's disposal. She lay moored by a frape off a semi-public quay door, approached from the Fore Street by a narrow alley known as Cherry's (or Charity's) Court.

The Major stumped down to the waterside in the fast gathering dusk and hauled in the boat. Luckily the tide was high, and reached within four feet of the sill of the doorway ; luckily, I say, because few contrivances in this world are less compatible than a ladder and a wooden leg. The tide being high, how-

ever, he managed to scramble down and on board without much difficulty; unmoored, shipped a paddle in the sculling-notch over the boat's stern, and very quietly worked her up and alongshore, in the shadow of the waterside houses.

Arrived at the quay-ladder leading up to Dr Hansombody's garden—once, alas! his own—and to the terrace consecrated by memories of the green-sealed Madeira, he checked the boat's way and looked up for a moment, listening. Hearing no sound, he slipped the painter around a rung, made fast with a hitch, and cautiously, very cautiously, pulled himself up the ladder, bringing his eyes level with the sill of the open door.

Heaven be praised! the little garden was empty. A moment later he had heaved himself on to the sill and was crawling along the terrace.

At the end of the terrace, in a dark corner by the wall, grew a stunted fig tree, its roots set among the flagstones, its boughs overhanging the tide; and by the roots, between the bole of the trees and the wall, one of the flagstones had a notch in its edge, a notch in old days cunningly concealed, the trick of it known only to the Major.

He drew out a small marlingspike which he carried in a sheath at his hip, and, bending over the flagstone, felt for the notch; found it, inserted the point, and began to prise, glancing, as he worked, over his shoulder at the windows of the house. A lamp shone in one . . . So much the better. If the room had an inmate, the lamp would make it harder for him or her to see what went on in the dim garden.

Ten years. . . . Could his hoard have lain all that time undisturbed? He had hidden it in the old days of the invasion-scare, as many a citizen had made secret deposit against emergencies. Banks were novelties in those days. Who knew what might happen to a bank, if Boney landed?

But ten years . . . a long time . . . and yet to all appearances the stone had not been tampered with. He levered it up and thrust it aside.

No! There the bags lay amid the earth! Two bags, and a hundred guineas in each! He clutched and felt their full round sides. Yes, yes, they were full, as he had left them!

WHO-OOSH!

Heavens! What was *that?*

The Major gripped his bags and was preparing to run; but, an instant later, cowered low, and backed into the fig tree's shadow as the whole sky leapt into flame and shook with a terrific detonation.

The Regatta fireworks had begun.

Across the little garden a window went up.

"My dear," said a voice (the Doctor's), "bring the child to look, if he won't be frightened."

In the window they stood, all three—the Doctor, 'Miss Marty,' the child—a happy domestic group, framed there with the lamp behind them. Deep as he could squeeze himself back into the shadow, the Major cowered and watched them.

The child crowed and leapt with delight. His father and mother looked down at him, then at one another, and laughed happily. Alas! poor Major!

They had no eyes to search the garden. What

should they suspect, those two, there in the warm circle of the lamp, wrapped in their own security ?

The rockets ceased to blaze and bang. At length the heavens resumed their dark peace, and the distant barrel-organ reasserted itself from the Town Quay. The child's voice demanded more, but his father closed the window and drew the curtain close. Panting hard, his brow clammy with sweat, the Major stole forth and down to the boat with his poor spoils.

Half an hour later he found himself in the crowd, his pockets weighted with guineas. Whither should he go ? In what direction set his face ? Eastward for Plymouth, or westward for Falmouth ? He roamed the streets, letting the throng of merry-makers carry him for the while as it willed ; and it ended, of course (you may make the experiment for yourself on a regatta night), in carrying him to the merry-go-round on the Town Quay.

He stared at it stupidly, his hands in his bulging pockets. He feared no thieves. To begin with, his appearance was not calculated to invite the attention of pickpockets, and moreover, there are none in Troy. He stared at the whirling horses, the blazing naphtha jets, the revolving mirrors, the laughing, irresponsible faces as they swept by and away again, and reappeared and once again passed laughing thither where, on the farther side of the circle, brooded (as it seemed to him) a great shadow of darkness.

Suddenly his heart stood still, and his few hairs stiffened under his tarpaulin hat. That sailor, riding with a happy grin on his face, and his face

towards his horse's tail! Surely not—surely it could not be. . . . ? But as the sailor whirled round into view again, it surely was Ben Jope!

The music and the merry-go-round slowed down together and came to a standstill. A score of riders clambered off, and a score of onlookers surged up and took their places. The Major ran with them, pushing his way to the far side of the circle where Mr Jope's horse had come to a stop. He arrived, but too late. Mr Jope had disappeared.

A moment later, however, the Major caught sight of him, elbowing his way through the gut of a narrow lane leading off the Quay by the fish market, and gave chase. But the weight in his pockets handicapped him, and the crowd seemed to take a malicious delight in blocking his way.

Nevertheless he kept his quarry in sight. A dozen times at least Mr Jope halted before a shop or a booth and dallied, staring, but ever on the point of capture he would start off again, threading the throng with extreme nimbleness. With a dexterity as marvellous as it was unconscious, he dodged his pursuer past the Broad Ship, up Custom House Hill, along Passage Street, out through the Tollway Arch and among the greater shows—the menagerie, the marionettes, the travelling theatre—all in full blast, almost to the extreme edge of the fair, where it melted into the darkness of the woods and the high-road winding up between them into open country. Here, hanging on his heel for a moment, he appeared to make a final choice between these many attractions, and dived into a booth over which a flaming

board announced a conjuring entertainment by Professor Boscoboglio,—"Prestidigitateur to the Allied Sovereigns."

The Major spied Mr Jope's broad back as he dipped and entered beneath the flap of the tent; and followed, elate at having run his quarry to earth. A stout woman, seated at the entrance beside a drum on which she counted her change, thrust out an arm of no mean proportions to block his entrance, and demanded twopence, fee for admission.

The Major, who had forgotten this formality, dipped his hand into his breeches pocket and tendered her a guinea. She eyed it suspiciously, took it, rang it on the lid of her money-box, and, recognising it for a genuine coin, at once transferred her suspicions to him.

"Tuppence out of a guinea?" she sniffed. "Not likely, with a man of *your* looks."

"It's genuine, ma'am."

"I ain't a fool," answered the lady. "I was wondering how you came by it. Well, anyway, I can't give you change; so take yourself off, please."

He argued, but she was obdurate. She hadn't the change about her, she affirmed, with a jerk of her thumb towards the interior of the tent. Their takings to-day hadn't amounted to five shillings, as she was a Christian woman.

The Major, glancing beneath the tent-cloth, spied a melancholy man extracting ribbons from his mouth before an audience of three men, a child and a woman. He heard Ben Jope's voice raised in approval. He

announced that he would wait outside until the performance concluded.

"Twenty minutes," said the stout woman nonchalantly.

"Good-evening, ma'am," said he, and stepping back, began to pace to and fro in front of the tent.

Why had he followed this man who, if you looked at it in one way, had been the prime cause of all his calamity? He smiled grimly at the thought that, as justice went in this world, he should be tracking Ben Jope down in a cold passion of revenge; whereas, in fact, he was hungry to grip the honest fellow's hand. From the panorama of these ten mischanced years the face of Ben Jope shone out as in a halo, wreathed with good-natured smiles. Ben Jope—

Here the Major flung up both hands and tottered back as, with a lift of the earth beneath his feet, a flame ripped the roof off the tent, and roaring, hurled it right and left into the night.

Under the shock of the explosion he dropped on hands and knees, and, still on hands and knees, crawled forward to a ditch, a full ten yards to the left of the spot where the tent had stood. In the darkness one of the victims lay groaning.

"Are—are you hurt?" The Major's teeth chattered as he crawled near and stretched out a hand towards the sufferer.

"Damn the fellow!" swore Ben Jope cheerfully, sitting up. "What'll be his next trick, I wonder?"

"You—you are not hurt?"

"Hurt? No, I reckon. Who are you?"

" Hymen, Ben —— Solomon Hymen. You remember—in the Plymouth Theatre, ten years back. Oh, hush, man, hush ! " for Ben, casting both hands up to his face, had let out a squeal like a rabbit's.

" An' I saw you die ! Oh, take him away someone ! With these very eyes ! No, damn it ! " Mr Jope pulled himself together and scrambled to his feet. " I paid for two pennyworth, but if this goes on I gets my money back ! "

By this time showmen and merry-makers, startled out of the neighbouring tents by the explosion, as bees from their hives, were running to and fro with lanterns and naphtha flares, seeking for the victims. A ring of the searchers came to a halt around the Major and Ben Jope, and Ben, catching sight of his companion's face, let out another yell.

" It's all right." The Major clutched him by the arm and turned. " It's all right, my good people. He can walk, you see. I'll take him along to the hospital."

He managed to reassure them, and they passed on. He slipped an arm under Ben's and led him away into the darkness.

" But I seen you blowed into air, ten years ago, *with* these very eyes," persisted Ben.

" And with these very eyes I saw you blown into air ten minutes ago ; and yet we're both alive," the Major assured him.

" An' I come here o' purpose to look up your ha'nts, havin' been always pretty curious about that tale o' your'n, but kep' moderate busy all these years."

" And Bill Adams ? "

"Wot?" Mr Jope halted. "Haven't you 'eard? Bill's dead. Drink done it—comin' upon it too 'asty. Simmons's boarding-house, Plymouth, that's where it was. *Quite* a decent house, an' the proprietor behaved very well about it, I will say. But where on earth have you been hidin' all these years, that you never heard about Bill?"

"In a French war prison, Ben. And, Ben, you found me a berth once, you remember. I wonder if you could get me into another?"

"O' course I can," Mr Jope answered cheerily. "You come along o' me to Plymouth an' I'll put you into the very job. A cook's galley, it is, and so narra' that with a wooden leg in dirty weather you can prop yourself tight when she rolls, an' stir the soup with it between-times!"

. . . . . .

They entered the hospital, and the Major packed his knapsack with hasty, eager hands.

"What's this mess on the floor?" asked Ben Jope, pointing to the fragments of plaster-of-Paris.

"That?" The Major looked up from his packing. "That's a sort of image I broke. Come along; we haven't time to pick up the pieces."

. . . . . .

They crossed the harbour in Cai Tamblyn's boat, and moored her safely at the ferry slip. On the knap of the hill the Major turned for a last look.

From the Town Quay, far below and across the water, the lights of the merry-go-round winked at him gaily, knowingly.

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